

# **INDEPENDENCE GENERATION**

## **Youth Study 2016 – Armenia**





**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**

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# FOREWORD



Like many post-Soviet states, the South Caucasus countries are still in transition. Armenia, the smallest republic in the region, is still trying to find its way between Europe and Russia and the values, integration models, and security factors related to it. The transformation into a democratic society and a free market economy is far from being completed. In addition, the country is challenged by the lasting conflicts with Turkey and Azerbaijan, which cause isolation as well as a «neither peace, nor war» environment.

The study at hand explores the worries, aspirations, values, and lifestyles of Armenia's youth. Young people who are today aged between 14 and 29 years grew up after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and in independent Armenia—«the generation of independence». They are an important indicator for the relationship to the Soviet legacy on the one hand, and the future development of their society on the other hand.

The research is based on a countrywide, representative survey that was conducted from February to March 2016 in Armenia, among young people aged between 14 and 29. It is orientated towards the Shell Youth Study, which has been periodically conducted in Germany since 1953 and has proved to be a valuable indicator of the society's mid-term development. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung implemented a series of similar studies in Western Balkan countries as well as in Central Asia. This study is part of a series in Eastern Partnership Countries, together with the Georgian one the first being completed. All of the studies are designed to allow comparison between the countries.

The results of the study draw an interesting picture of young people in Armenia by showing the challenges they have to deal with in terms of private,

economic, and political life. They are facing economic and political insecurity caused by an insufficient educational system, high unemployment, and autocratic political structures. This results in the retreat to privacy with a strong focus on family and friends and a high reluctance to get involved politically and/or socially. Nevertheless, most young people are optimistic about the future. The survey also reveals huge disparities between youth in the capital and rural areas as well as between female and male participants. Traditional role models and values prevail, so that these young people seem to reproduce traditional values and attitudes, despite being the generation of independence.

Finally, the results also show that there is a group of young people—still a minority—who believes in a more democratic and liberal society and is prepared to commit to this. Looking at recent developments in Armenia, this group is becoming bigger and more visible. Their motivation and success in some issues give hope that Armenian youth can finally become agents of change.

This study is meant to be a starting point for deeper analysis and political discussions. It is targeted to decision-makers, academics, as well as NGOs and youth organisations in Armenia and abroad. By indicating concerns, aspirations, and lifestyles it gives young people a voice. Moreover, the study aims to fuel a debate on how to tackle challenges youth are struggling with, in order to keep this rich potential for the country's development.

To close, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Yerevan State University, which has been a reliant and very professional partner in this project—in particular, Artur Mkrtichyan, Harutyun Vermischyan, and Sona Balasanyan. I am also very grateful to Klaus Hurrelmann of the Hertie School of Governance for his valuable advice, to all the Armenian experts that were involved as consultants, and—last but not least—to the FES Armenia team, especially the responsible project coordinator, Liana Badalyan, for her hard and excellent work.

*Julia Bläsius*  
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# CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	9
<b>Introduction</b> .....	13
<b>Study Methodology</b> .....	14
<b>Quantitative Study Sampling</b> .....	15
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Young People .....	16
<b>Focus Group Selection Criteria</b> .....	18
<b>Education and Employment</b> .....	21
<b>Introduction</b> .....	21
<b>Main Findings</b> .....	22
<b>Analysis</b> .....	23
Education .....	23
Employment .....	37
<b>Discussion</b> .....	46
<b>Democracy and Government</b> .....	49
<b>Introduction</b> .....	49
<b>Main Findings</b> .....	50
<b>Analysis</b> .....	50
Political Participation and Democracy.....	50
Political Stances.....	62
Development Problems and Challenges .....	66
<b>Discussion</b> .....	71
<b>Perception of Foreign Policy</b> .....	75
<b>Introduction</b> .....	75

<b>Main Findings</b> .....	76
<b>Analysis</b> .....	77
International Integration Priorities .....	77
Problems of International Integration .....	83
<b>Discussion</b> .....	91
<b>Concerns and Aspirations</b> .....	95
<b>Introduction</b> .....	95
<b>Main Findings</b> .....	96
<b>Analysis</b> .....	97
Satisfaction with Life .....	97
Societal Risks .....	101
Migration and Experience of Discrimination .....	107
<b>Discussion</b> .....	118
<b>Identity, Values, and Religion</b> .....	121
<b>Introduction</b> .....	121
<b>Main Findings</b> .....	122
<b>Analysis</b> .....	123
Social Affiliation and Trust.....	123
Perceptions of Value Norms .....	135
(In)tolerance and Social Space .....	144
<b>Discussion</b> .....	149
<b>Family and Marriage</b> .....	151
<b>Introduction</b> .....	151
<b>Main Findings</b> .....	151
<b>Analysis</b> .....	152
Relationships with Parents.....	152
Marriage.....	163
<b>Discussion</b> .....	171
<b>Leisure and Lifestyle</b> .....	173
<b>Introduction</b> .....	173

<b>Main Findings</b> .....	174
<b>Analysis</b> .....	175
Pastimes.....	175
Mass Media and the Internet.....	179
Personal Expenses .....	184
Habits and Common Behaviour .....	189
Sex Life .....	194
<b>Discussion</b> .....	198
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	201
<b>References</b> .....	203



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the Youth in Armenia 2016 study reveals the attitudes, opinions, and expectations of the country's young people—the independence generation. The findings show the present-day life of youth in Armenia in the context of value clashes, contradictions in social reality, as well as the traditional cultural and national context. Findings demonstrating the existence of tendencies typical of post-Soviet societies are striking in their contradictions.

The study aims to present the key issues of education, employment, political participation, concerns, aspiration identity, religiousness, tolerance, family lifestyle, pastimes, and the lifestyle of youth in Armenia.

Young people in Armenia are fairly complex. They show a higher level of intellectual independence and medium independence in everyday life (on the whole they can solve their domestic issues autonomously), but they are less independent in financial and economic matters, which is indicative of their vulnerability in the job market (see also Key Employment Issues of the Youth in RA 2013: 73). Our study showed that they are heavily dependent on their parents—both materially and morally—and under the social pressure of communities, especially in rural areas. Young men are given more freedom to make decisions, while young women find it hard to express themselves as decision-makers.

Thus, in the context of key issues—independence, self-realisation, and vital planning—education continues to be an important sector in newly independent Armenia and addresses vital issues for the youth. In particular, the study shows that the knowledge gained by the youth does not guarantee them jobs in the area of their specialisation. Patronage plays a big role in getting a job and building a career, which in turn further increases the chain of social de-

dependencies and the underdevelopment of personal mechanisms for resolving problems.

In addition, the clash of different cultural values between Western and/or post-Soviet educational and volunteering opportunities makes it hard for them to make decisions (and critically reflect) and prevents them from accepting what society has to offer. The problem becomes even more serious given that voluntary work is not regulated by Armenian legislation; consequently, legal gaps and the absence of overall standards, give rise to different interpretations concerning volunteering (as a learning experience and opportunity to contribute to social change). The social dependency factor also conditions young people's political orientation and behaviour, and the reliance on the opinions of parents and traditional legitimate values in decision-making. In the sense of contradictory perceptions of reality, the most characteristic feature of today's youth in Armenia is the complementary attitude to alternatives, which is most evident when discussing their preference between EU and EEU.

According to the findings of the study, when realising their important plans, young people encounter societal risks, the bases of which must be sought in the manifestations of social injustice. Although the study raises and voices the diverse concerns, anxieties, and intolerance of youth in Armenia, these factors do not deter them from continuing to strive and be goal-oriented and optimistic about their future.

In general, the study's findings reveal that today's youth in Armenia are vulnerable and hardly independent. More specifically, this is particularly evident with regard to female participants who exhibit more social passiveness, exclusion and dependency; more mature youth who exhibit higher levels of social pessimism and distrust; urban youth who exhibit more political passiveness and social distrust. Income and education are major factors affecting the lives of young people: the lower their income, the higher the levels of their exclusion, dissatisfaction with life, pessimism, and dependency; the lower the education, the higher the level of political activism and the lesser their social inclusion.

Social policies benefitting young people are very important for solving key issues. It is clear that education, tolerance, volunteering, «do-good» social dispositions towards oneself and others, financial independence, and politically active citizenship, in line with several important aspects of gender socialisa-

tion are significant themes, which may be addressed more specifically in action (whether at the interpersonal, local, state, or international level).

### Sex

Male	Female
Social activeness	Social passiveness
Social inclusion	Social exclusion
Independence	Dependence

### Age

Low	High
Optimism	Pessimism
Social Trust	Social distrust

### Residence

Village	City/town
Political activeness	Political passiveness
Social Trust	Social distrust

### Income

Low	High
Social exclusion	Social inclusion
Dissatisfaction with life	Satisfaction with life
Pessimism	Optimism
Dependency	Independency

### Education

Low	High
Political activeness	Political passiveness
Social exclusion	Social inclusion



# INTRODUCTION



The post-Soviet generation in the 25-year-old independent Republic of Armenia (Armenia) has been included in new social relations. Under these conditions, old intermediate institutes and groups—which acted as its links with society—have lost their former regulatory function, while new ones are still in the process of establishing themselves. The growth in individualisation has drawn people out of the former frameworks of collective moral supervision, which secured the regulatory role of old social norms, stereotypes, and traditions. On the other hand, globalisation has given rise to opposing positions and new contradictions in all countries of the world, including Armenia. The establishment of Armenian statehood is taking place within this context. Therefore, it is clear that the transitional period of building the newly independent Armenian state would be accompanied by a clash between the humane and material, and by a conflict between local traditional and global formal values, which are manifested in the peculiar discourse of the years of independence. Under these circumstances, the appropriate socialisation of the youth is particularly urgent; that holds also true for the resolution of their issues in a timely manner and the imperative of conducting the correct policies for young people. Therefore, the issues that concern young people, the process of their identification, and the continuing study of the factors affecting them are the demands of the time, and this sociological study is important for state policymakers and implementers. The data presented here are «fertile soil» for the response of political and social decision-makers, as well as for future youth studies. Furthermore, the data are particularly important for a territory such as the South Caucasus in general, and specifically for newly independent Armenia, which is currently in the process of establishing its statehood.

Youth is typically regarded in sociology as an ascribed status, or socially constructed label, rather than simply the biological condition of being young. The term is used in three ways: very generally, to cover a set of phases in the life

cycle, from early infancy to young adulthood; instead of the rather unsatisfactory term «adolescence», to denote theory and research on teenagers and the transition to adulthood; and, less commonly now, for a set of supposed emotional and social problems associated with growing up in urban industrial society (Scott 2014: 813). At the same time, youth is the main social resource for the development of society and the social model for the solution of developmental issues (Furlong 2013, Hurrelmann & Quenzel 2015).

### **Study Methodology**

The aim of this study was to identify the world view and positions of Armenian youth within the context of current social and political change, by addressing the following: (i) satisfaction, (ii) trust, (iii) affiliation, and (iv) activity/involvement. The main themes are:

1. Education and Employment
2. Democracy and Government
3. Concepts of Foreign Policy
4. Concerns and Aspirations
5. Religion and Religiousness
6. Family
7. Leisure and Lifestyle

The study of these themes has allowed us to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators for issues concerning Armenian youth, clarifying the specific features of socialisation, essential expectations and strategies, as well as tolerance and identification/differentiation.

The study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative sections.

1. A quantitative method was employed within the frameworks of this study, using a standard interview format.
2. In order to ensure a more in-depth picture and raise qualitative perceptions of the problem, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the youth on concrete topics: smoking, alcohol, friendship, religion, politics, integration into the EEU, drawing closer to the EU, regional com-

munity issues, neighbourliness, perceptions of value norms, tolerance, aims/fears, education/employment, daily essential strategies, involvement.

## Quantitative Study Sampling

Combined cluster sampling was chosen as the correct approach for this large-scale quantitative study; the permanent population of the Republic of Armenia—the base sample—was separated into internally heterogeneous, externally homogeneous subgroups of equal volumes called «clusters» (according to predefined numbers). Each of the clusters was composed of eight targeted «addresses», which were studied completely. Additional subsampling was not conducted within the selected clusters.

Cluster sampling was conducted proportionate to the population size of all residential areas in Armenia, according to the country's ten administrative regions (*Marzes*) and the eleven regions of Yerevan city. Sampling started with the first randomly selected residential area, where the first cluster to be studied was located, according to the following step:

$$n = \frac{P}{Cl}$$

Where «n» is the step, «p» is the permanent population of Armenia according to the 2011 population census, «CL» is the predetermined number of clusters. The other residential areas containing the remaining clusters were also selected in the direction of accumulative distribution increase. Based on this approach, the selection of a given number of clusters in a certain residential area is directly proportional to the population of that same area. This ensures proportionate sampling, as well as proportionate representativeness of large residential areas, such as regional centres and the capital city in the selected sample.

Moreover, systematic random sampling was conducted due to the absence of a complete and trustworthy list of addresses for each residential area. The starting point—first address—for each cluster was selected through simple random sampling of a concrete address from the residential area lists at the respective polling stations.

For urban communities specifically, the apartment building/house closest to the polling station in ascending order—the list of addresses was provided in advance—was selected as the starting point for each cluster, retaining the odd and even digits of addresses. Respective rotation has been applied at the end of the addresses, in accordance with this logic.

The number of the first building selected coincided with the number of the first apartment in the building. Similarly, respective rotation was applied in cases where the number of the selected building was larger than the overall number of apartments in it. Only one interview was conducted in each apartment building. Systematic sampling included every second apartment building or house in ascending order of addresses. Two interviews were conducted in each of the buildings located in regional cities. The community administration building, which mainly corresponds with the polling centre, was chosen as the starting point for rural residential areas. Of the residents of the selected apartment/house aged 14 to 29, the one whose birth date was the closest to the interview date was questioned.

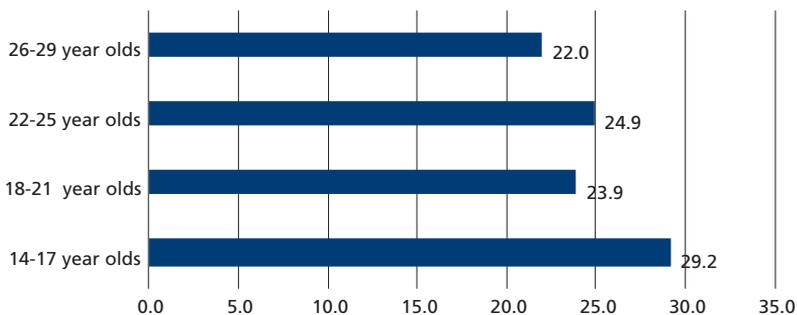
1,200 youth from various regions of Armenia—both rural and urban areas—participated in a survey (the margin of error for the sample being 3 per cent) conducted through standardised interviews. The youth were born from 1987 onwards. This cut-off is the year when the processes of independence began, fuelled by the first anti-Soviet demonstrations in Armenia. Thus, our respondents are people whose initial socialisation took place during the periods leading to independence, the establishment of independence, and its strengthening. Thus, from this point of view, we are dealing with the generation of independence.

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Young People**

41 per cent of the respondents were male and 59 per cent female. This difference, disproportionate to the actual population regarding gender, is due to a widespread tendency among young men to leave for migrant work. Of the interviewed youth, 97.7 per cent were Armenian by nationality. The Yezidis, Greeks, and Assyrians made up 0.5 per cent each, while Kurds, Russians, etc. made up smaller percentages.

The distribution by age groups of the respondents was as follows: 14–17 (29.2 per cent), 18–21 (23.9 per cent), 22–25 (24.9 per cent), and 26–29 (22 per cent) (see **Figure 1.1**).

**Figure 1.1: Age of respondents**



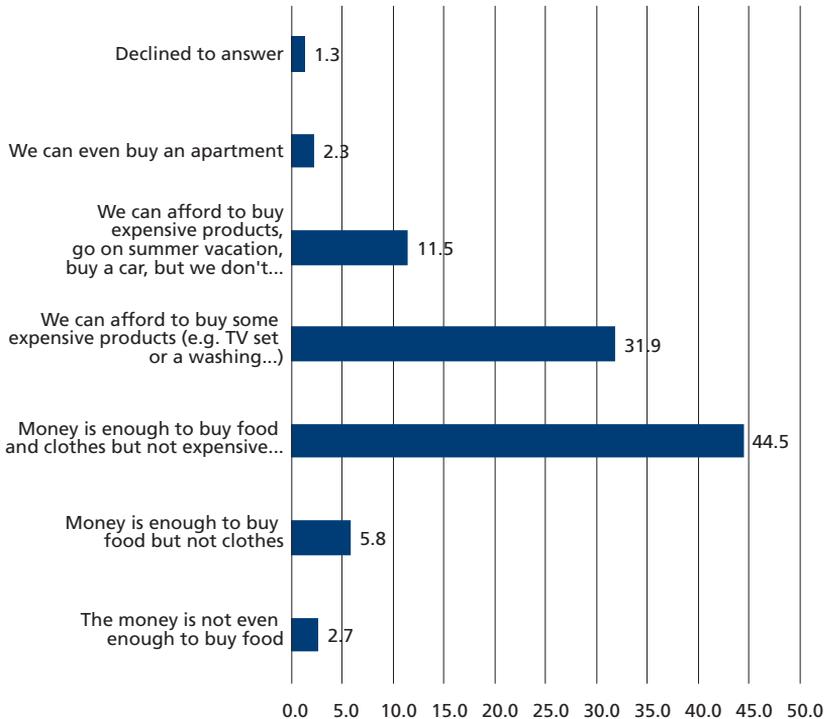
In terms of the household's financial status, 44.5 per cent of the respondents noted that the sum was sufficient for purchasing food and clothing but not for buying expensive items; 31.9 per cent noted that they could allow themselves to buy certain expensive items; 11.5 per cent could buy expensive items and go on summer vacations, but could not buy an apartment; 5.8 per cent noted that the sum was sufficient for food, but not for buying clothes; 2.7 per cent indicated that the sum was not sufficient to even buy food; 2.3 per cent could buy an apartment (See **Figure 1.2**). 44.9 per cent of the respondents do not have a car in their household; 42.2 per cent have one car, and 13 per cent have two or more cars.

In response to the question about their parents' levels of education, a significant portion of the respondents replied that their mothers and fathers have secondary education (38.4 and 35.9 per cent respectively); incomplete secondary education (0.7 and 2 per cent respectively); vocational education (31.1 and 32 per cent respectively); five-year higher education<sup>1</sup> (22.2 and 22.1 per cent respectively); baccalaureate level (4.6 and 5.7 per cent respectively); master's

<sup>1</sup> Before 2005, when the Armenian higher educational system became a part of the Bologna process, the university education in the country was of five years (with no division between the undergraduate and graduate levels).

(2.3 and 1.1 per cent respectively); PhD (4.6 and 0.7 per cent respectively); and doctoral degrees (0.4 and 0.5 per cent respectively).

**Figure 1.2: Which of the following descriptions most adequately describes the financial situation in your household?**



## Focus Group Selection Criteria

Sixteen FGDs were conducted in all. The following were selected as focus group formation criteria (Figure 1.3):

1. Residence: urban/rural
2. Gender: male/female, also mixed groups
3. Age: 14–20 / 21–29

Figure 1.3

Residence	Gender	Age	Number	Total N
Urban	Male	14–20	1	16
		21–29	1	
	Female	14–20	1	
		21–29	2	
	Mixed groups	14–18	1	
		19–22	1	
23–29		1		
Rural	Male	14–20	2	
		21–29	2	
	Female	14–20	2	
		21–29	2	

- a. Six of the planned eight focus groups of urban youth were conducted in Yerevan and two in regional cities. Of the six FGDs in Yerevan, three were conducted with the mixed participation of representatives of both genders, one for each of the age groups: 14–18, 19–22, and 23–29.
- b. The rural communities were chosen from different regions of Armenia. The size of the village community and its distance from the city (Yerevan, regional administrative centre) were considered as additional control criteria.

Each focus group consisted of eight to ten participants.



# EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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## Introduction

Since 2005, Armenia has officially been integrated into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA 2014). In surveys on education in the post-socialist bloc, the issues of clashes of ideology—from the point of view of reforms—have been raised many times (Silova 2010). In general, European, Soviet, and American ideologies clash in the Armenian educational sphere. The road from the policies set down on paper to the reality of the everyday education of Armenian youth has not yet been finalised and hardly studied. It is clear that it is developing within the frames of so-called contradictory social constructs (Tiryakian 1972). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, Robbins 2010) stress that when the critical potential of those being educated is limited, the dominant forces of society—the wealthy strata, those who hold power—acquire symbolic dominance over those who learn.

Armenia had particularly high rates of youth unemployment, varying between 32 per cent and 39 per cent (ETF 2013: 5). Previous research (Ameria 2003) has shown that high-level professionals encountered career problems and lacked development perspectives: it was shown that during the period 1989–2001, 250,000 to 300,000 professionals with higher and post-graduate education did leave the country (ibid: 10). The country report of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI, Makaryan, and Galstyan 2012: 7) stated that the Armenian educational system still has to adjust to the challenges of the evolving economic structures, because too many young Armenians acquire skills that cannot be properly used at home or abroad. Educational establishments are knowledge-creating intentional systems (Luhman and Schorr 2000), and the attention and vigilance shown towards them in state and educational policies are justified not only for formal education, but

also from the point of view of public order, quality of life for society, and the shaping of the identity and future of the youth being educated. The quality of education is what creates fundamental directions for youth to perceive, interpret, be part of, and operate in the social world. This analysis shows the social environment in which young people in Armenia are receiving their education, and, as a result, what the main consequences are to the accumulation of their socio-economic and cultural capital.

### Main Findings

- ▶ The youth in the study frequent comprehensive and higher education institutions with pleasure, because there they can socialise and mingle with their peers, as well as make new acquaintances.
- ▶ The time spent on extracurricular studies is statistically tied to progress in school/college, but not to progress in higher education.
- ▶ The scarcity of finding the necessary financial resources for acquiring good professional education is a serious problem. 24.3 per cent of the youth do not want to continue their education because of the absence of finances.
- ▶ According to the youth (10.2 per cent school/college and 0.8 per cent in higher education), it is possible to «buy» marks and exams; however, the majority of them say that they have not received their marks through bribery.
- ▶ The knowledge gained by the youth does not guarantee finding a job in their chosen line of work. Only 35.4 per cent of them work in their chosen profession and 13.5 per cent have jobs related to their specialisation. Professional work is presented as an «unprofitable» occupation.
- ▶ The practice of «who you know» plays a major role in getting a job. There is also a need for nepotism and patronage when building a career.
- ▶ Young people mainly start work at 23.
- ▶ Marital status and gender are significant factors related to working: 67.2 per cent of married men work, while 76.6 per cent of married women do not.
- ▶ Only 18.9 per cent noted that they have a private income; the remainder are forced to rely on others for support.

## Analysis

### Education

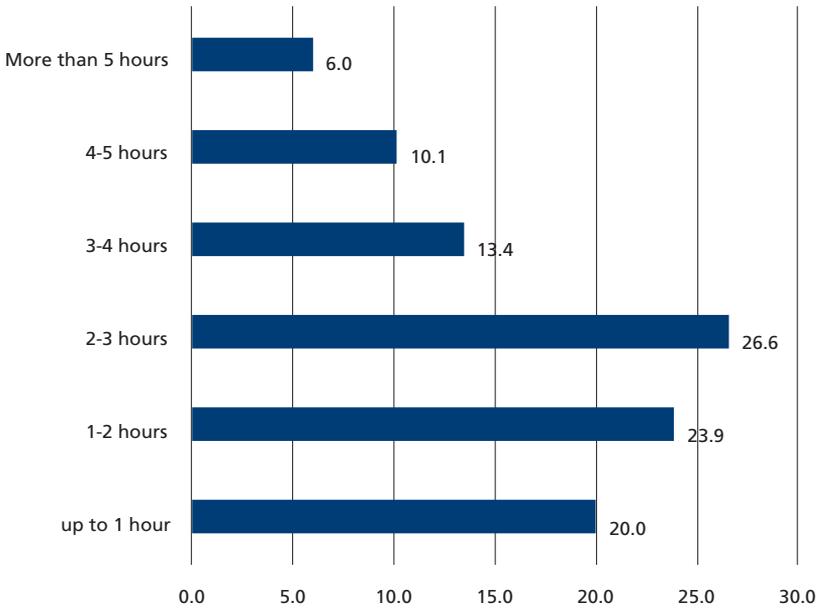
49.1 per cent of those questioned (N=1,200) were students at the time of questioning; 28.1 per cent were in secondary or vocational education, 20.7 per cent in higher education, and 0.3 per cent doing their PhD. 50.9 per cent of the respondents were not studying anywhere. The distribution of students and non-students according to gender, age and residence is presented below (**Figure 2.1**):

**Figure 2.1: Are you studying in any educational establishment at present or are you continuing your education?**

		Yes	No
Gender	Male	51.0%	49.0%
	Female	47.7%	52.3%
Age	14–17	95.1%	4.9%
	18–21	64.8%	35.2%
	22–25	19.4%	80.6%
	26–29	4.5%	95.5%
Residence	City	52.6%	47.4%
	Village	43.1%	56.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>49.1%</b>	<b>50.9%</b>

The educational progress of pupils in schools and colleges is quite good: 16.4 per cent presented themselves as making excellent progress, 48.3 per cent good progress, and 35.3 per cent satisfactory progress. Despite the aforementioned high level of progress, for a substantial number of pupils the number of extracurricular study hours is not that high. As can be seen in **Figure 2.2**, only 29.6 per cent of them spend more than an average three hours per day on home assignments; 78.5 per cent of poor learners spend less than three hours on homework. Moreover, the progress of pupils at schools and colleges and the hours allocated to their lessons are correlated—that is, the more hours spent on extracurricular work, the better the progress (Spearman's  $\rho = -.288^{**}$ ).

**Figure 2.2: How many hours do you spend studying per day (excluding hours at school)?**



53 per cent of pupils attending schools/colleges do so with pleasure (**Figure 2.3**) and 59.6 per cent of them consider everyday school/college easy and not stressful (**Figure 2.4**). 42 per cent of respondents noted that they attend school/college, sometimes with pleasure and sometimes not. Moreover, there is a correlation between the attitude towards attending school/college and the everyday stress of school/college; in other words, the more stress there is, the more reluctantly the pupils attend school (Spearman’s rho=-.177, p<.001).

Taking into account the pupils’ answers concerning extracurricular studying and the everyday stress of schools/colleges, we note that the majority of pupils are not especially overloaded with lessons. At the same time, 79 per cent of the pupils questioned intend to continue their education in institutions of higher education. This intention was reported by 92.6 per cent of those with excellent progress, 85.4 per cent of those with good progress, and 64.7 per cent of those with satisfactory progress (**Figure 2.5**) (Spearman’s rho=-.267, p<.001).

Figure 2.3: Would you say that you go to school/college ...?

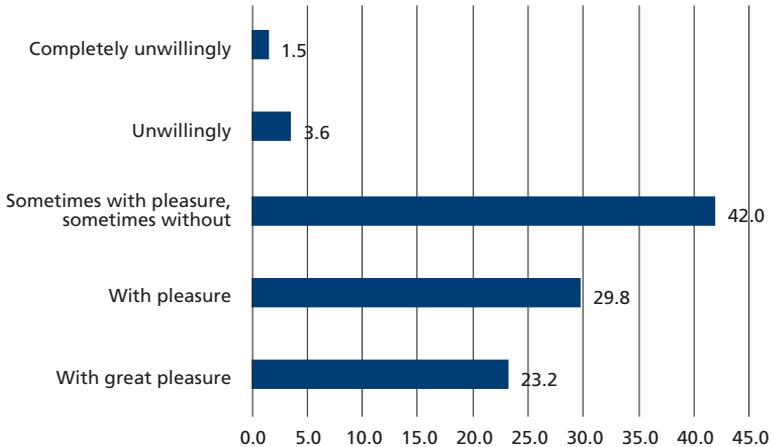
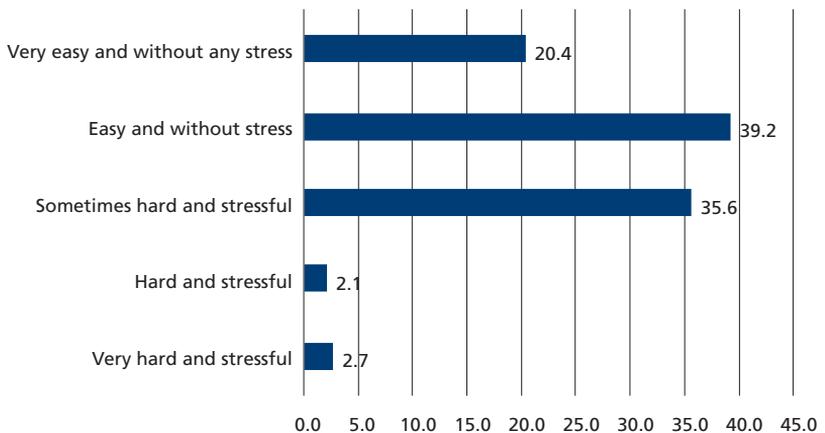


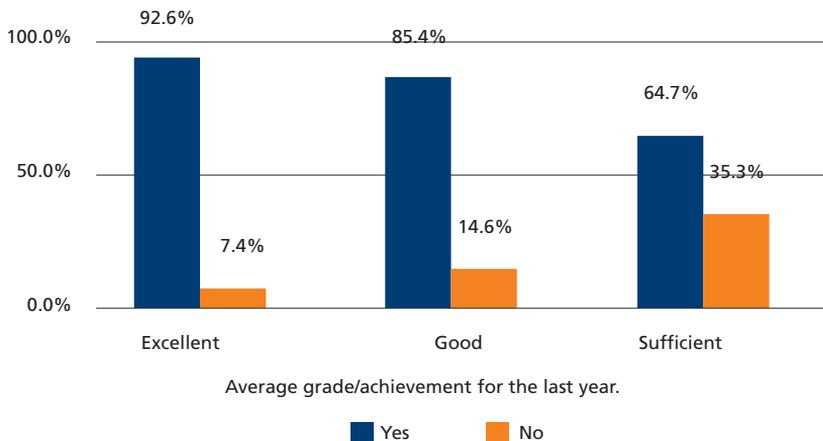
Figure 2.4: In your opinion, what is everyday life in your school /college like?



Incentives for continuing their education were given as follows: the desire to develop their intellectual abilities (26.6 per cent); the demand for self-realisation (12.4 per cent); the necessity for acquiring a diploma as a condition for

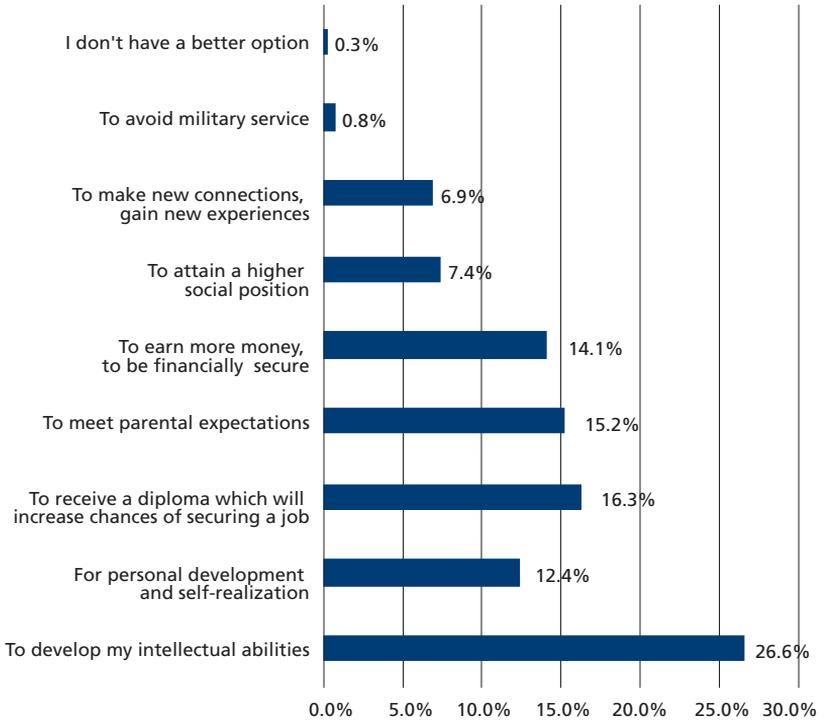
securing a job in the future (16.3 per cent); the influence of parental expectation (15.2 per cent); the desire to earn more money and live more securely (14.1 per cent); the desire to attain a higher social position (7.4 per cent); the importance of gaining new experiences (6.9 per cent); the opportunity to avoid compulsory military service (0.8 per cent); the absence of any alternative (0.3 per cent) (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5: Do you intend to study at a higher education institution?



Their family incomes and the intention of school/college pupils whether or not to pursue higher education are correlated ( $n=325$ ,  $X^2=12.48$ ,  $\phi=0.196$ ,  $p=0.002$ ). The percentage ratio of the decided and undecided pupils concerning the question of higher education is presented below, according to family income (Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.6: Why do you intend to continue your education at a university?**



**Figure 2.7: Do you intend to study in a higher education institution?**

Family income	Yes	No	Total
Low income	55.6%	44.4%	8.3%
Middle income	79%	21%	76.3%
High income	90%	10%	15.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>21.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the table, the higher the family income, the higher the number of youngsters from those families expressing a desire to receive higher education.

«There are young people who are very clever but do not have the financial resources to apply to institutions of higher education and there are those who are financially secure, but are not clever»

(17-year-old male, pupil, rural community).

In the families where neither parent has received higher education, 74.9 per cent of the youngsters expressed the desire to be accepted into an institution of higher education, whereas the percentage was 88.7 per cent for young people in families where both parents have received higher education. There is a difference of 13.8 per cent. In families where only one of the parents has received higher education, the number is 83.1 per cent.

In the total sample (N=1,147) the number of young people having both parents with higher education is 240; of the remaining 907 either one parent has higher education or neither of them do. Despite the significant difference in numbers, there are more books (Mdn=6; 51–100 books) in the houses where both parents have higher education, than in all of the houses where only one parent has higher education or neither has higher education (Mdn=4; 21–30 books). The number of books present in the house is correlated to whether or not the parents have higher education ( $U=87352.5$ ,  $z=-4.96$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

It is important to stress that for 83.5 per cent of the respondents, receiving higher education is perceived as fashionable, while only 34.2 per cent consider the level of education to be a primary factor for finding a job (it is secondary for 28.7 per cent). 26.2 per cent consider higher education the primary factor for job promotion or building a career (it is secondary for 25.9 per cent).

Youth who do not wish to further their education think that their level of education is sufficient (25.7 per cent); confess that they do not like studying (15.7 per cent); are not sure that education will ensure a better future (10 per cent); are preparing to move to another country to live or work (7.1 per cent) (**Figure 2.8**).

«Why should we study if we're going to be migrant workers in the end?»

(18-year-old male, regional town)

**Figure 2.8: Reasons for not intending to continue education at university**

My level of education satisfies me	25.7%
Lack of financial means	24.3%
I don't like studying	15.7%
I am not sure that it will ensure a better future	10.0%
I am preparing to move to another country to live	7.1%
Other reasons	17.2%

It is noteworthy that 24.3 per cent do not want to continue their education because of a lack of financial means. This indicates the existence of a serious social problem.

*«I do not think that any average family living in a regional town or village can send their child to a high-ranking institution or abroad to study, because they cannot pay high tuition fees»*

(24-year-old female, regional town).

Referring to the progress of students in higher education institutions, it should be noted that 27.6 per cent of students present themselves as making excellent progress, 52.8 per cent good progress, and 14 per cent satisfactory progress.<sup>2</sup> In general, the difference between students and school/college pupils is not noteworthy from the point of view of extracurricular study hours. As can be seen from **Figure 2.9**, over three hours a day are allotted for studying by 37 per cent of students, compared with 29.6 per cent by pupils. Unlike school/college pupils, progress by students at university and the time allotted daily for studying are not correlated. (Spearman's  $\rho = -.116$ ,  $p = .071$ ).

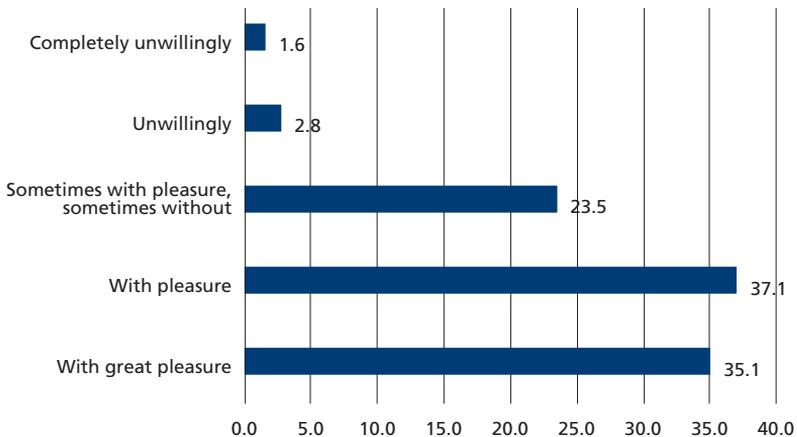
.....  
2 5.6 per cent of the students are in the first year. This question does not apply to them.

**Figure 2.9: On average how much time do you allot daily to studying?**

	University	School/college
Up to one hour	17.1	20.0
1–2 hours	24.0	23.9
2–3 hours	22.0	26.6
3–4 hours	17.9	13.4
4–5 hours	10.2	10.1
More than 5 hours	8.9	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

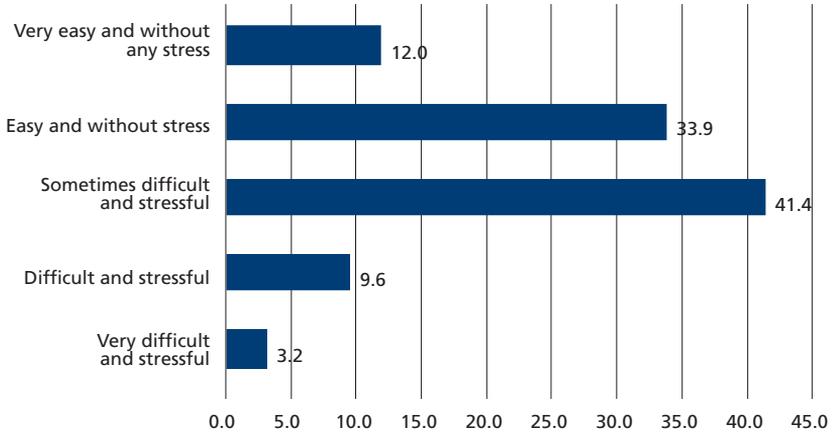
72.1 per cent of students enjoy attending university (Figure 2.10), while 45.8 per cent of them consider their daily routine at the university to be easy and not stressful (Figure 2.11). These figures show that unlike school/college, those who attend universities have a more positive attitude and attend with pleasure or great pleasure.

**Figure 2.10: Would you say that you go to university ...?**



The qualitative data obtained from the FGDs—in addition to the quantitative data presented—show that for young people, the primary purpose of attending a university is not always linked to studying. The university environment not only presents itself for learning, but also for creating social links and for young people to spend time as students.

Figure 2.11: In your opinion, what is everyday life in your university like?

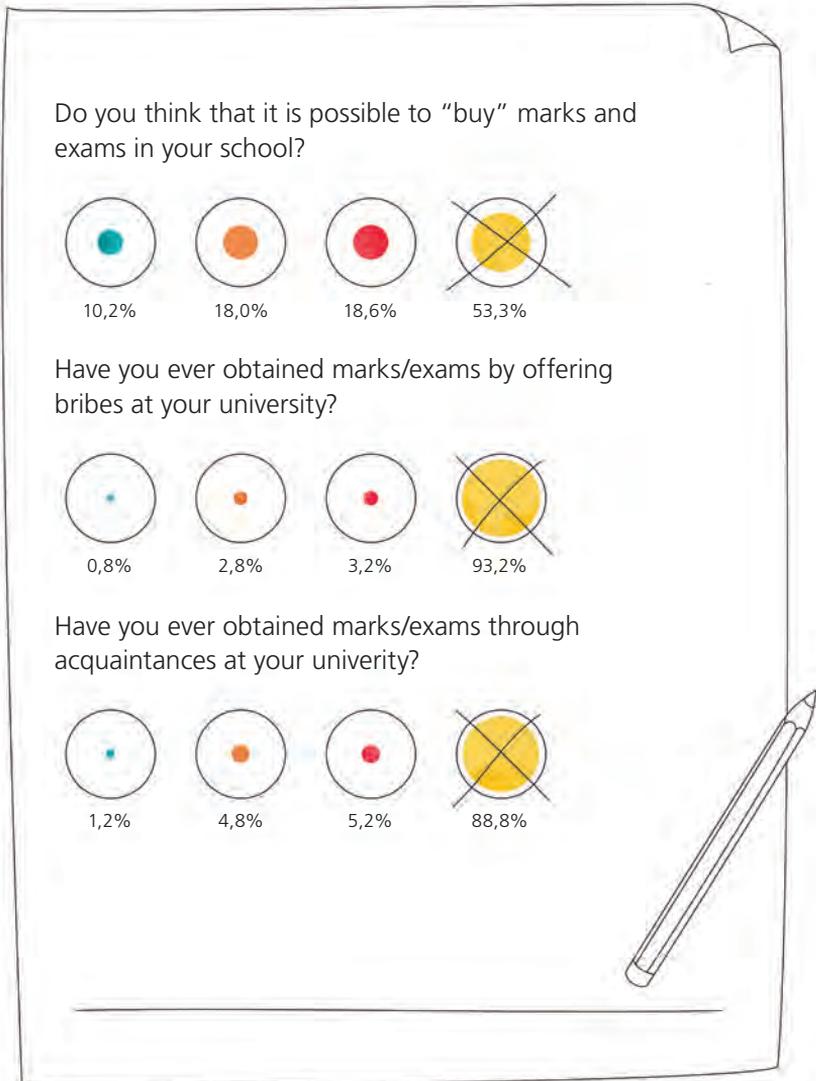


*«Some come to university just because they need a diploma, some because they have nice clothes and want to show them off. Some come to find a candidate to marry. Some just come because they want to learn. Some come just because there is nothing else to do, and some come because their parents have told them they must learn so they come, but don't learn. From that point of view, our nation is extreme in everything. In this case also it is extreme. Each of us sees this in our cohorts: some learn well, some don't learn at all, but those who genuinely learn are few»*

(21-year-old female student, Yerevan).

As far as the experience and/or opportunities for obtaining marks at school, college, or university through bribery or via acquaintances is concerned, 10.2 per cent of pupils in school/college think that it is always possible. Only 53.3 per cent say that it is impossible to «buy» marks and exams at their school/college. In contrast, 93.2 per cent of university students insist that they have never obtained marks through bribery and only 0.8 per cent confess to frequently offering bribes. This picture is almost the same with regard to obtaining marks through acquaintances: 88.8 per cent of university students insist that they have never obtained marks that way (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.12

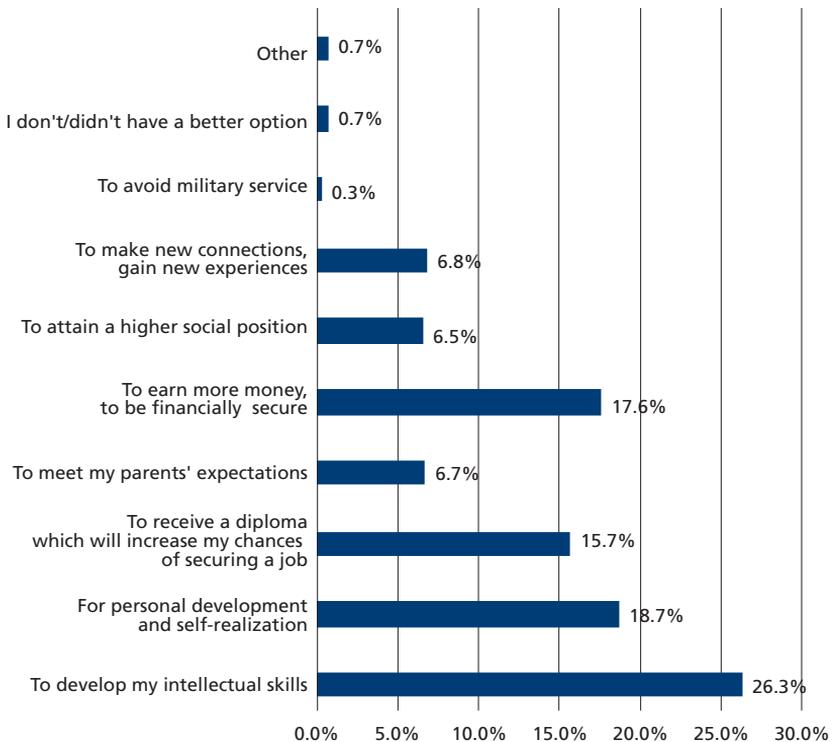


● Frequently ● Sometime ● Rarely ● Never

42.3 per cent of respondents who are not students in secondary or vocational institutions want to continue their education. The reasons they give are as follows: to develop their intellectual abilities (26.3 per cent); for self-realisation (18.7 per cent); to earn more money and be secure (17.6 per cent); obtain a diploma in order to increase the chances of securing a job (15.7 per cent); to gain experience (6.8 per cent); to justify their parents' expectations (6.7 per cent); to strive to reach a higher social position (6.5 per cent); because of the absence of an alternative (0.7 per cent); to avoid compulsory military service (0.3 per cent) (**Figure 2.13**).

Basically, for 15.7 per cent of these young people, having a diploma will increase the chances of them getting a job.

**Figure 2.13: Why do you intend to continue your education at a university?**

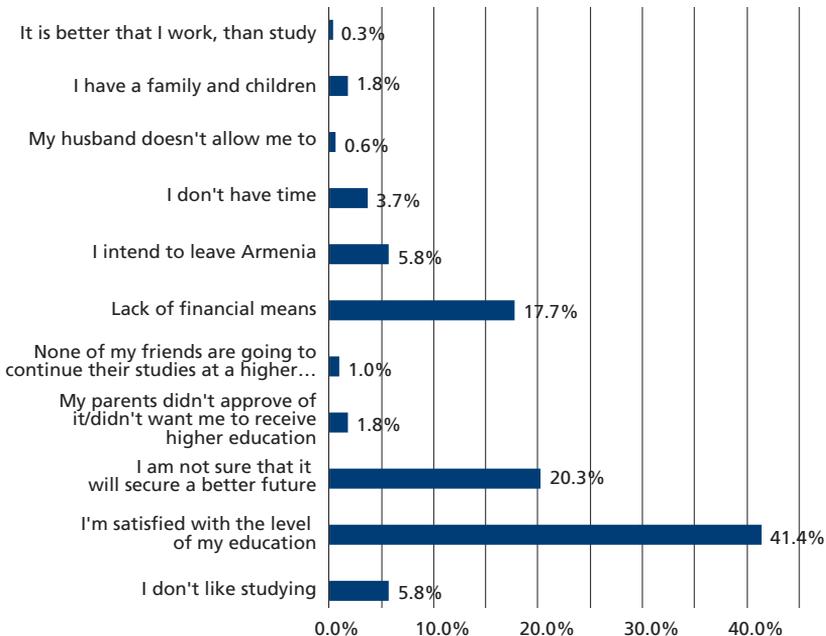


«How important is education? For me it is no longer important. And let me say, if right now ... in other words, with this mentality, at this age, if I had a 15- to 16-year-old child, I would definitely not tell them to go to university. It's not that they have forced me at home; it was my choice. But I am very disappointed. I mean I was expecting something completely different and in reality something else happened. Now, how much people work on themselves is more important. That's more important than a diploma but ... well, we understand that a diploma is required for employment because you can't do without it»

(24-year-old female, Yerevan).

Those who do not want to continue their education point out the satisfaction with their level of education (41.4 per cent); their pessimism towards having a better future by being educated (20.3 per cent); lack of financial means (17.7 per cent); intention to leave the country (5.8 per cent); lack of time (3.7 per cent) (Figure 2.14)

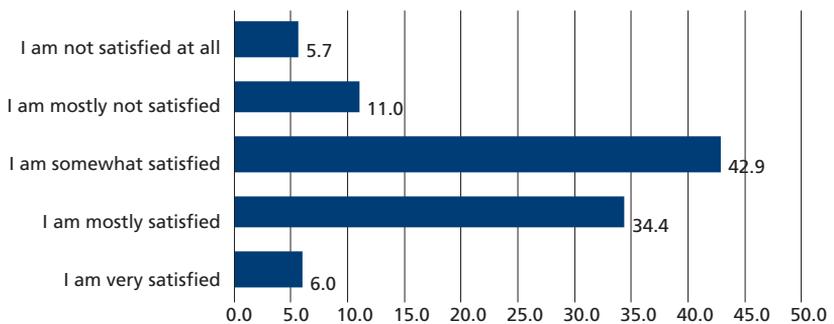
Figure 2.14: Why don't you want to continue education at a university?



**Figure 2.15: Will you continue your education?**

	Yes	No
Single	53.2%	46.8%
Married	23.9%	76.1%
Divorced	28.6%	71.4%
Widow(er)	44.4%	55.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.5%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>

It is noteworthy that 5.8 per cent of those not wishing to continue their education confessed that they do not like studying. Obstacles confronted in family life are also considered important. Thus, 1.8 per cent of those refusing to continue their education point out that their parents have obstructed them, 0.6 per cent say their husbands don't let them; and 1.8 per cent simply say that they have a family and children. It is noteworthy that the desire to continue education in post-school-age young adults is significantly associated to their marital status ( $X^2=65.651$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.284$ ) (Figure 2.15)

**Figure 2.16: How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in Armenia?**

On the other hand, young people pay a great deal of attention to the level of education when they choose a spouse. That is important or very important for 76.4 per cent of them. Furthermore, in village communities, higher education is considered more important for boys than for girls; in particular, that is the opinion of 24.8 per cent of the respondents. In the city, 15 per cent were of

that opinion. At the same time, 70 per cent of respondents in urban areas who thought that higher education is more important for boys were themselves males (this figure was 87.5 per cent among those in rural areas).

Summarising the perceptions and positions of Armenian youth to education, it is noteworthy that 16.7 per cent of them are not satisfied with the quality of education in Armenia, 42.9 per cent are partially satisfied (**Figure 2.16**), while only 14.6 per cent of them consider raising the quality of education to be the primary social problem that the Armenian government should focus on. During the FGDs, the youth noted that the quality of education has dropped over time.

*«The further back we go, the better the universities were»*

(24-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«The students are becoming disillusioned because the education level is bad in certain universities»*

(21-year-old female, regional town).

**Figure 2.17: How satisfied are you with the level of education in Armenia?**

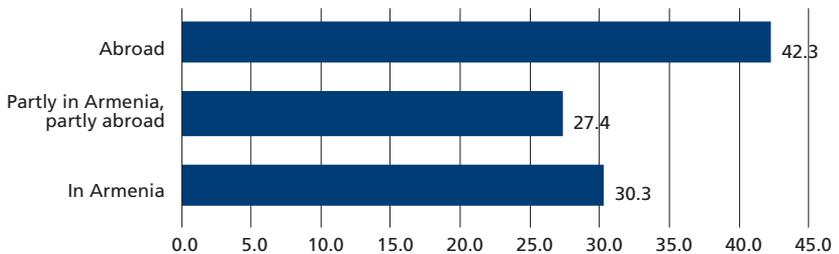
Are you studying in any educational institution at present?	Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Somewhat satisfied, somewhat not	Mostly not satisfied	Not satisfied at all
Yes, at school/college	6.6%	43.5%	39.9%	6.6%	3.3%
Yes I am continuing studies at university	3.7%	31.7%	48.8%	10.6%	5.3%
Yes I am continuing my education in a PhD/doctoral programme	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%
No	6.7%	30.7%	41.9%	13.7%	7.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>

It is important to note that a significant statistical relationship has been revealed between young people attending/not attending any educational institution and

stances on the quality of Armenian education ( $X^2=37.098$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.102$ ) (Figure 2.17). Those who do not study at any educational institution and those who have considerable experience in studying (the PhD candidates) are the ones who are the least satisfied with the quality of education.

42.3 per cent of young people wish to study abroad if the opportunity arises, because they lack trust in the quality of education in Armenia (60.6 per cent of those preparing to leave Armenia have this desire). 30.3 per cent of respondents prefer to study in Armenia, while 27.4 per cent would like to study partly in Armenia, partly abroad (Figure 2.18).

**Figure 2.18: If you could choose, where would you prefer to get your education?**



## Employment

As seen in the table below, only 5.4 per cent of the respondents who work also study; 43.6 per cent study but do not work; 20.1 per cent work and do not study; 30.9 per cent neither study nor work (Figure 2.19).

**Figure 2.19: Are you employed?**

		Yes	No	Total
Are you studying in any educational institution at present/ are you continuing your education?	Yes	65	520	585
		5.4%	43.6%	100.0%
	No	240	369	609
		20.1%	30.9%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>305</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>1194</b>
		<b>25.5%</b>	<b>74.5%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Only 37.4 per cent of young people studying have done internships or taken further professional qualification courses. Moreover, female respondents have more frequently completed internships or participated in further professional qualification courses ( $X^2=24.094$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.145$ ) than have post-school-age respondents (according to age:  $X^2=128.596$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.329$ ; according to educational institution:  $X^2=96.707$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.285$ ) or those in urban areas ( $X^2=10.623$ ,  $p=0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.094$ ) (Figure 2.20).

**Figure 2.20: Have you participated in internship/ training/ further professional qualification courses?**

	Yes	No
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	29.0%	71.0%
Female	43.2%	56.8%
<b>Age in years</b>		
14–17	14.4%	85.6%
18–21	37.1%	62.9%
22–25	53.5%	46.5%
26–29	49.8%	50.2%
<b>Are you studying in any educational institution at present?</b>		
Yes, I am studying at school/college	15.9%	84.1%
Yes I am continuing studies at my university	45.7%	54.3%
Yes I am continuing my education in a PhD/doctoral programme	100.0%	0.0%
No	45.4%	54.6%
<b>Residence</b>		
City	40.9%	59.1%
Village	31.4%	68.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37.4%</b>	<b>62.6%</b>

25.5 per cent of those questioned were in employment at the time of questioning (6.6 per cent worked either part-time or from time to time; 2.4 per cent were self-employed). Youth seem to be active in terms of employment after 19 years of age, and the employability reaches its peak by the 23 years of age (Figure 2.21). Nevertheless, 55 per cent of young people over the age of 23 are not employed at present. Significant factors related to employment are marital status and gender; in particular, 67.2 per cent of married males are employed, while 76.6 per cent of married women are not (Figure 2.22).

Figure 2.21: Do you work?

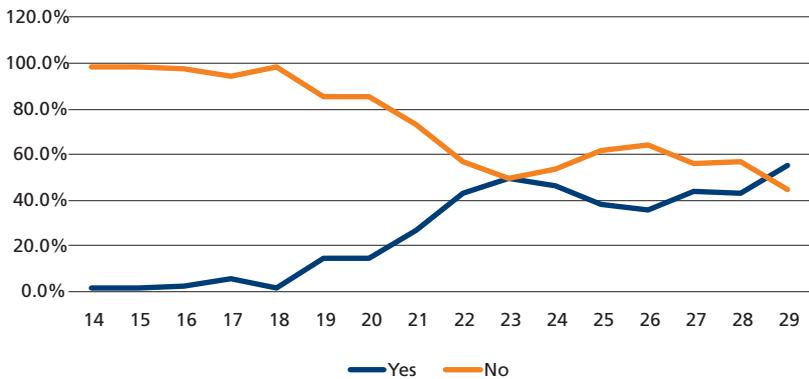
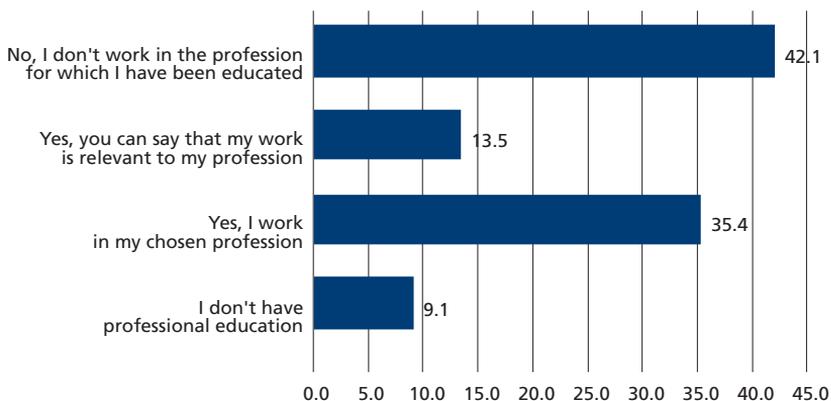


Figure 2.22: Are you employed?

Marital status	Gender	Yes	No
Single	Male	26.9%	73.1%
	Female	19.8%	80.2%
Married	Male	67.2%	32.8%
	Female	23.4%	76.6%
Divorced	Male	100.0%	0.0%
	Female	25.0%	75.0%
Widow(er)	Male	42.9%	57.1%
	Female	0.0%	100.0%

Of the young people who are currently employed, only 35.4 per cent work in their chosen profession, while 13.5 per cent work in jobs related to their profession (Figure 2.23).

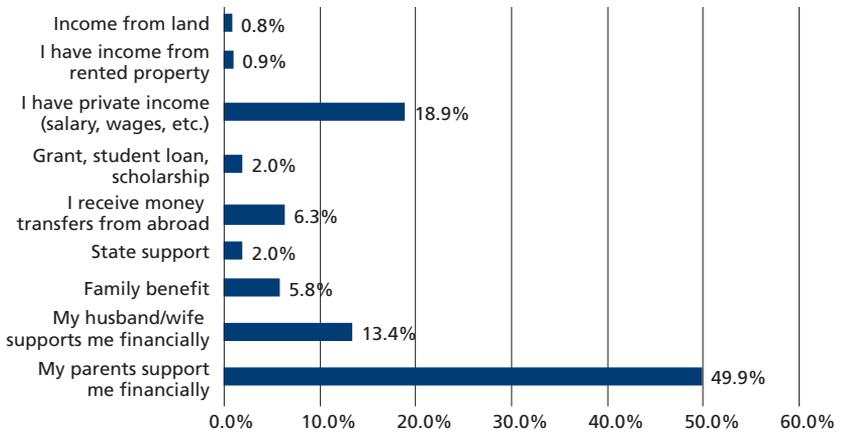
**Figure 2.23: Do you work in your profession—i.e., on a job for which you have been or are being educated?**



Only 18.9 per cent of the respondents noted that they have a private income. The remainder are forced to rely on others for support: parents (49.9 per cent), spouse (13.4 per cent), and relatives living abroad (6.3 per cent). Only few respondents mention family benefits (5.8 per cent), other forms of state assistance (1.7 per cent), and student scholarships/benefits (2.0 per cent) as their main financial source (Figure 2.24).

Taking into account the education they have received, 51.8 per cent of respondents think that they will find it difficult to get a job, while 6.7 per cent do not believe that they will ever find work.

Figure 2.24: Which are your income sources?



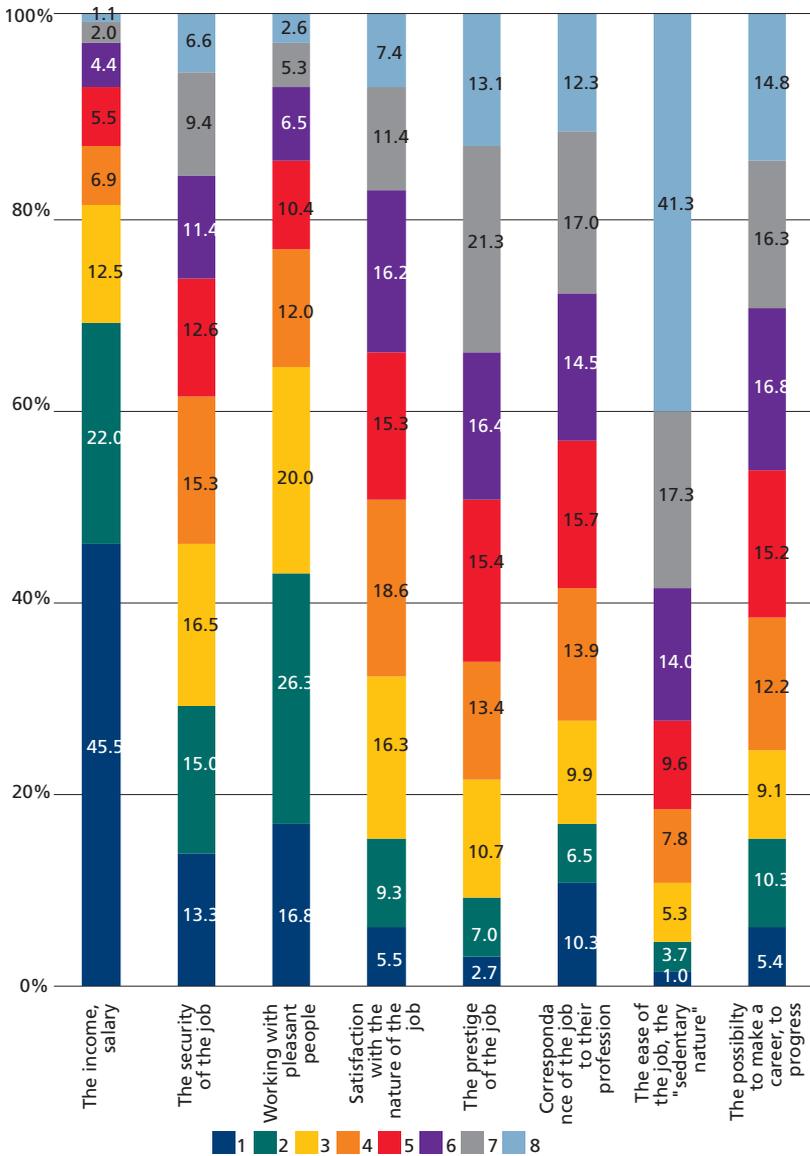
The male members of the FGDs for the age group 14–20 were deeply concerned about the problems of finding employment.

*«There are few jobs, many professionals, you can find jobs let's say with a normal salary ... and in order to find a good job, you need acquaintances, a diploma, brains [meaning resourcefulness and cunning], brains, together with knowledge»*

(20-year-old male, regional town, unemployed).

Regarding choice of work, young people's priorities are obvious: 45.5 per cent considered the lucrateness of the job to be of primary importance (this was secondary for 22 per cent); 16.8 per cent, working with pleasant people (secondary for 26.3 per cent); 13.3 per cent, safety of the job (secondary for 15 per cent); 10.3 per cent, the correspondence of the job with their specialisation (secondary for 6.5 per cent); 5.5 per cent, satisfaction with the nature of the job (secondary for 9.3 per cent); 5.4 per cent, opportunities for promotion (secondary for 10.3 per cent); 2.7 per cent, prestige of the job (secondary for 7 per cent); 1 per cent, ease of the job (secondary for 3.7 per cent) (Figure 2.25).

Figure 2.25: Please rank these factors in the order of their importance.



From the qualitative findings, it also appears that the role and significance of work—as the primary means to achieve prosperity—have considerably decreased in Armenian society. Professional work presents itself as an «unprofitable» occupation.

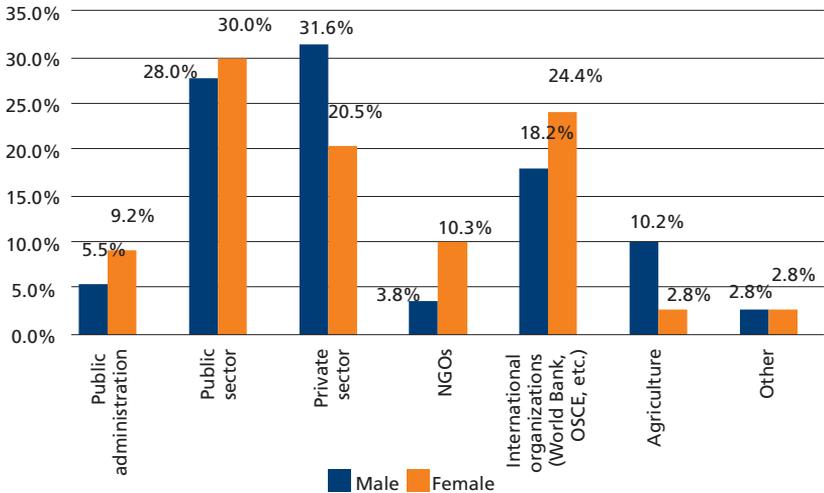
*«I have acquaintances in Armenia who graduated university with first-class honours but now drive taxis. There are no good jobs [meaning those which are well-paid]. In order to have a job, you need to have money that you can give to get the job, or an acquaintance: uncle, familial friend etc. It is also good if you know languages»*

(15-year-old male, village community, unemployed).

*«The good positions [meaning those that secure social status and pay well] are occupied. We're waiting for the older generation to retire, make some room so we can work»*

(18-year-old female, village community, employed).

**Figure 2.26: Which of the following sectors would you like to work in?**

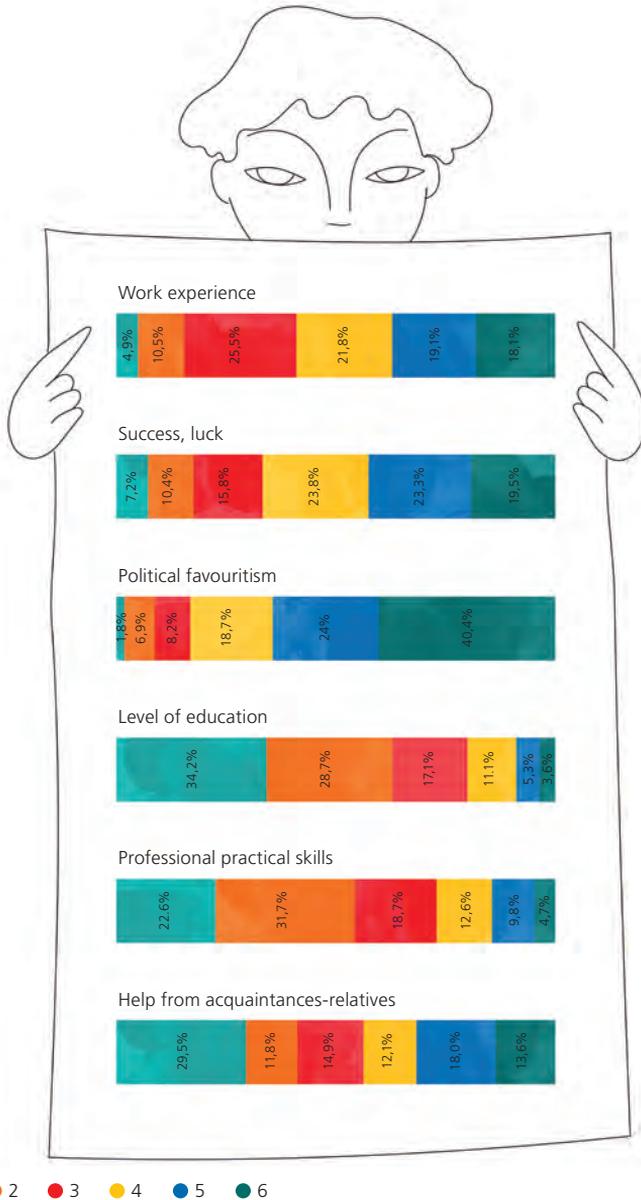


29.2 per cent of those questioned want to work in the public sector of the labour market and 25.1 per cent in the private sector. It is noteworthy that 21.8

per cent of those questioned want to work in an international organisation, 7.7 per cent in NGOs, 5.8 per cent in agriculture, and 7.7 per cent in public administration. A statistically significant association has been revealed between the gender of those questioned and the preferred area of employment ( $X^2=64.881$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.238$ ). In particular, young women show a greater preference for working in the public sector, international organisations, and the public administration system, in contrast to young men, who prefer agriculture and the private sector (**Figure 2.26**)

As far as finding work and/or promotion at work, young people think that the role of the institute (practice) of an acquaintance or friend is more important than possessing professional practical skills (29.5 per cent and 22.6 per cent respectively), and success in life is more important than any work experience (7.2 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively) (**Figure 2.27**). This picture changes when the same factors are evaluated from the point of view of promotion/career. Here, the help of an acquaintance/friend and professional practical skills are given equal importance (24.3 per cent and 24.5 per cent), while work experience is given priority by 11.1 per cent of the participants and success by 9.1 per cent (**Figure 2.27**). The role of political favouritism is also more important for a successful career than for getting employment (4.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.27: Please rank these factors in the order of their importance.



During the FGDs on the topic of employment, the concept of «acquaintances» was considered central.

*«Many find work purely through their own knowledge, but ... well maybe two out of ten; having good friends and in-laws does not hurt, but knowledge is really required more for the acquaintance so that they can intercede with more confidence»*

(26-year-old female, regional town.)

## Discussion

The attitudes of Armenian youth towards education is illustrated at the levels of value orientations and practical intentions. As in the Soviet era, education is observed as a public good at the value level, but with regard to individual engagement and practical intentions, education is not observed as a means of developing cultural capital (Bourdieu 2001). In particular, receiving education is not seen as a means of acquiring knowledge or getting a professional job in the future. Instead, it is perceived as a means to strengthen social ties, receive social recognition, and confirm the social status of being a young person. Thus, social capital is more valued than cultural capital. This is confirmed by the relatively low levels of time invested in learning by young people. Departing from the national mentality (Arcruni 1904), young people value relationships with peers more than investing time in learning. Moreover, university achievement and extracurricular learning are weakly related. This is because the Soviet legacy proposes valuation of education as a public good, while the Armenian socio-economic reality sharply differs from what it is used to be during the Soviet era. For instance, the higher educational settings are almost absent of state funding, the inflow of international students is weak, and the universities are forced to rely on paid student fees. Although tuition fees are not so high if taking the quality of education into account, this nevertheless represents a heavy burden for parents—who primarily pay the tuition fees for their children—because of social pressure that makes them feel obliged to assure higher education for their children. As a result, the number of students entering universities has sharply increased compared to the Soviet era (National Competitiveness Report of Armenia 2010), which enables the youth who would not otherwise qualify for higher education to receive diplomas;

this does not address the desires of the youth themselves, but the desires of their parents or families.

The influence of parents is also reflected in the fact that families with higher education tend to reproduce their cultural capital through education. Metaphorically speaking, education is turned into a fashionable social «accessory», but will not evolve into economic capital, especially for disadvantaged youth. In the absence of an institutionalised system of full scholarships, the problem of educational inequity thus becomes more serious for these youth and contributes to the reproduction of social inequity.

The youth themselves do not observe the enhancement of educational quality as one of the major issues to be addressed by the Armenian government. Instead, they address the problem of workplaces and occupational issues. This means that one form of capital will not grow into another form of a capital: the interrelation between education (being cultural capital) and occupation (being economic capital) is undermined. With the fall of the Armenian economic system, the demand for professional knowledge and for a highly qualified workforce has decreased as many business organisations, and state agencies still use outdated technologies and means for staff management. The massive unemployment (most youth who are not studying at any educational setting now are also unemployed), kinship (among relatives and friends), legacy of the past, and the patriarchal structure of employment add to this, leading to risks of corruption. As a result, it is clear why only a small portion of young people value profession when entering the job market.



# DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT

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## Introduction

The post-Soviet processes of democratisation in the countries of the Caucasus are proceeding in a fundamentally different way than, for example, in post-socialist Eastern European countries (for external influences see, for example: Lebanidze 2014; concerning the Georgian example, see: Siroky & Aparasidze 2011). Under the conditions of an unfinished war, Armenian society is trying to solve the entirely peaceful issues of socio-economic development and democracy on the one hand, while on the other hand maintaining a high degree of militarisation. Both the liberalisation of the economy and the democratisation of politics are subject to the imperatives of militarisation. The privatisation of means of production has not resulted in the establishment of a free competition and anti-monopoly regime, and attempts to regulate democratic forms of government have still not eliminated the authoritarian administration—the existence of which is also largely contingent on the resumption of the war (MacFarlane 1997). New institutions and ideological guidelines, new cultural regulatory traditions, and the ensuring of uninterrupted feedback have not been formed under these conditions. The loyalty of youth towards state authorities is established when different groups of young people are convinced that it is serving them and the realisation of the state's aims state well (Nagle & Mahr 1999: 141f; Ishkanian 2015). One of the preconditions for this is the exclusion of a highly centralised, authoritarian administration ensuring rule of law.

Civic culture is the essential foundation of democracy. Young citizens' political postulates, values, evaluations, and conduct are highly important for a democratic regime, because there cannot be democracy without democrats. For the establishment of democracy, what young people know about the political system (awareness viewpoint), what their feelings are towards it (emotional viewpoint), how they evaluate it (value viewpoint), and how they operate

within that system (praxeological viewpoint) are extremely important. Here we touch on the evaluations of youth in Armenia on matters of democracy and the current political situation.

### Main Findings

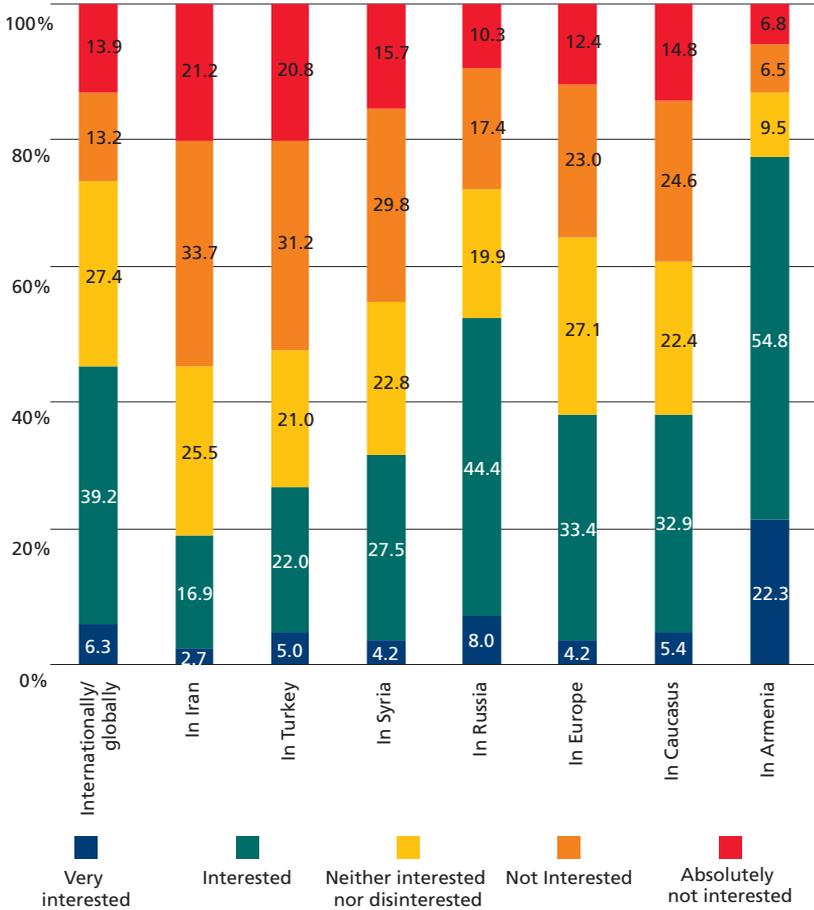
- ▶ 77.1 per cent of the respondents are interested in the political events taking place in Armenia (22.3 per cent are very interested, 54.8 per cent are interested), but a significant number of them (24.6 per cent) are not prepared to take part in the national assembly (NA) elections if they were held now.
- ▶ Young people's level of trust in the elected bodies is fairly low; in particular, 51.7 per cent do not trust the ruling political parties at all.
- ▶ If there were NA elections today, 51.4 per cent of young people living in rural areas are certain which party they would vote for, while only 35.1 per cent of those in urban areas are decided.
- ▶ The higher the respondents' level of education, the less inclined they are to vote for any party and/or participate in the NA elections.
- ▶ For 50.5 per cent of the respondents, the Internet is the main source of information on political events. 33.4 per cent get their information from news media on the Internet media and 17.1 per cent from social networks.
- ▶ The more the personal expenses of young people decrease, the more inclined they are to say that public wealth should be equally distributed.
- ▶ The more young people are satisfied with the level of democracy in Armenia, the more optimistically they envisage their own future and that of the country's economy.

### Analysis

#### Political Participation and Democracy

The study's findings show that 77.1 per cent of the youth in Armenia are mainly interested in political events taking place in Armenia (22.3 per cent are very interested, 54.8 per cent are interested), in Russian political events (52.4 per cent), in political events on the international stage (45.5 per cent), in politics in the Caucasus region (39.3 per cent), in political events in Europe (37.5 per cent) (**Figure 3.1**).

Figure 3.1: How much are you personally interested in political affairs?



It should be noted that 70.9 per cent of the respondents have the right to vote. Moreover, over half (51.4 per cent of those who have the right to vote) have always participated in elections, while 14.4 per cent have never participated (Figure 3.2).

Despite the fact that the respondents generally always, or almost always, participate in political elections, confidence among young people in elected po-

litical bodies is quite low: 51.7 per cent do not trust the ruling political parties; 53.9 per cent do not trust the opposition parties; 53.8 per cent do not trust the President of the Republic; 52.7 per cent do not trust the NA; and 40.3 per cent do not trust local self-government bodies (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2: If you can remember, how many times have you voted since you obtained the right to vote?

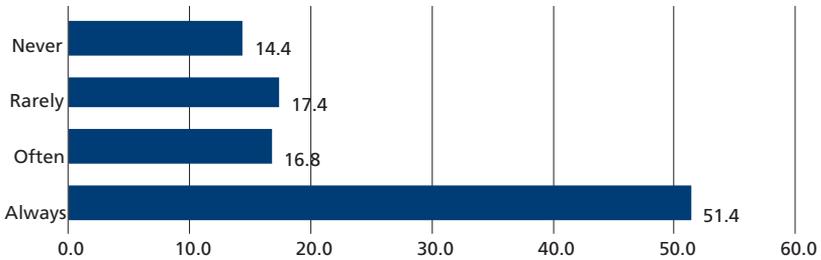
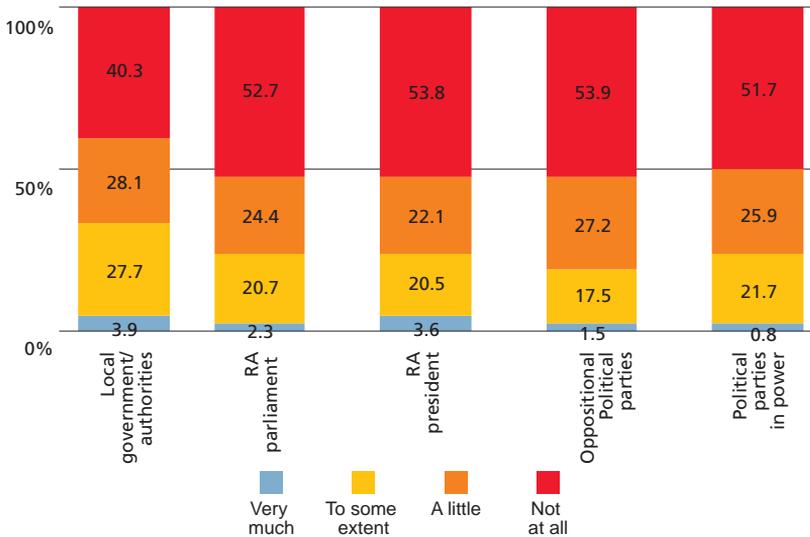


Figure 3.3: How much do you trust the following institutions in general?



Qualitative data also portray an environment of mistrust.

*«It [the government] decides within itself and adopts new laws, but there are things that are of no use to the public, the people»*

(15-year-old female, village community).

*«In any case, they [political figures] will do what suits them best»*

(20-year-old male, regional town).

*«Our politics, I'll be honest, it will sound rude, but it reminds you of a brothel. Our politics ... when you enter the National Assembly where people should be making normal decisions about how they can improve the condition of the nation ... what do they do? They [politicians] get there and start to fight between themselves»*

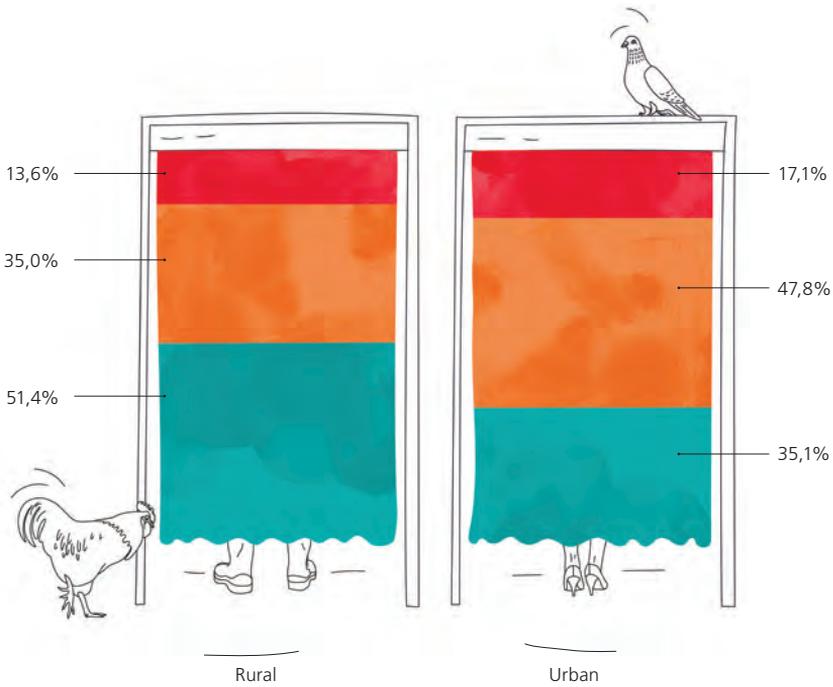
(26-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«And the worst is that this country is being governed by such people who think more about helping themselves than helping the nation. On the one hand, they show that they are doing everything for the nation, but in reality they are doing very little»*

(23-year-old male, regional town).

In response to the question of which political party would they vote for if the NA elections were to take place today, 37.2 per cent answered none, while 24.6 per cent answered that they would not participate. A statistical association has been identified between participating in the elections, voting for any party, and place of residence of the respondents ( $X^2=19.832$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.161$ ). It should be emphasised that if the NA elections were to take place today, 51.4 per cent of respondents in rural areas know which party they would vote for, but 35.1 per cent of respondents in urban areas are undecided. 64.9 per cent of the respondents in urban areas would not participate and/or vote for any party, compared with 48.6 per cent of respondents in rural areas (Figure 3.4). On the other hand, an interesting statistical association has been identified between participating in elections, voting for any party, and the level of education of the respondents ( $X^2=13.952$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.135$ ). The higher the respondents' level of education, the more they are inclined not to vote for any party and/or participate in the NA elections. If the elections were held today, 45.8 per cent of those with secondary/vocational education are decided and would vote in favour of one or other party, while only 32.6 per cent of those with higher education would do so (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4: If the elections for the RA parliament were held now, would you vote?



● Yes ● No ● I will not participate at the elections

In the opinion of most respondents (86.5 per cent), the interests of young people are represented only partly or little in Armenian political circles (11.2 per cent think that they are not presented at all).

Many respondents were also pessimistic about the voice and issues of youth being taken into account. 31.3 per cent think that national governing bodies—such as the NA and the Armenian government—do not take their voice into account at all, while 25.8 per cent think the same about local government bodies (Figure 3.6). Furthermore, according to 43.6 per cent of the respond-

ents, their voice has no significance on the outcome of political elections, and 22.7 per cent think it has little significance (Figure 3.7)

Figure 3.5: If the elections for the RA parliament were held now, would you vote?

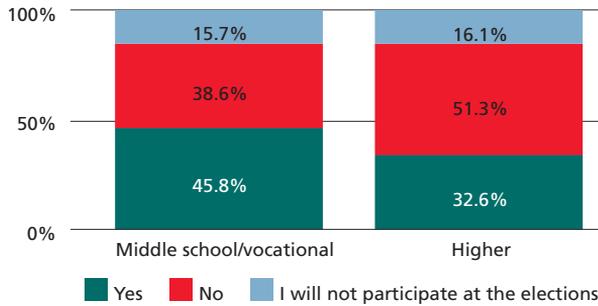
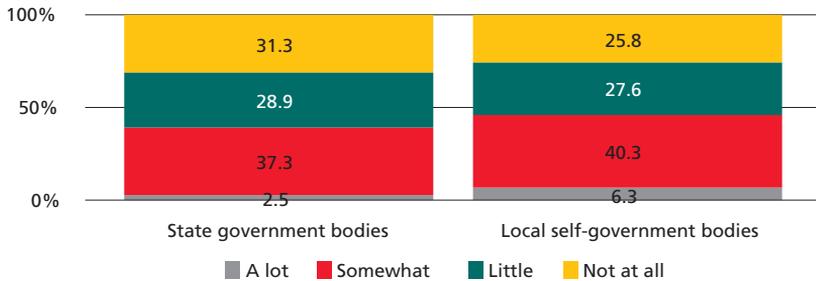


Figure 3.6 : How much is the voice of the youth taken into account?



FGD participants also think that the voice of young people is not decisive in politics. One of the participants even stated this within the context of Armenia’s culture:

«Here, a young person’s word isn’t commonly accepted as being correct»  
 (22-year-old female, Yerevan).

Figure 3.7: In your opinion, to what extent is your opinion important to the results of political elections?



● A lot ● Somewhat ● Little ● Not at all

*«I'm not, by and large, interested in politics. There are many in my circle who discuss it; it does not interest me that much because however much we discuss it, it makes no difference, what they have already decided will happen. I think we may have some influence in very small matters, but not in global issues; for example, when the constitution was changed, it was not favourable for us, but the government had already decided»*

(21-year-old male, regional town).

*«At our final bell» [school graduation day], all of the teachers came into the last lesson and told us «you are our strength, you are our future generation, you must decide». In their time, their teachers had told them the same thing and they changed nothing; in the same way, we won't be changing anything»*

(23-year-old male, village community).

*«Today in Armenia, everything is not that transparent—as it is in Europe—so that the struggle of the youth is taken into account; their voices don't reach their goal»*

(26-year-old female, Yerevan)

At the same time optimistic opinions were also heard during the FGDs, which did not assume that the voice of young people was reaching political authorities, but contained «calls» for political participation and activity.

*«Youth is the most active force. Whenever there are serious political problems and issues in our country, the government turns its attention first to universities—because they are all young there—so that the moving force in society cannot function; in other words, in very volatile situations the young people are paid attention to so that they do not stand in opposition. And today I would evaluate our [youth] influence as middling»*

(21-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«The youth are important because they [authorities] pay attention to where the reaction of the youth is coming from and what it will be»*

(24-year-old male, regional town).

*«As long as we, the youth, think our voice counts for nothing, that's how it will remain, because we are the strongest force in this society. Many ... if you ask people who are acquainted with literature and science ... will say that we*

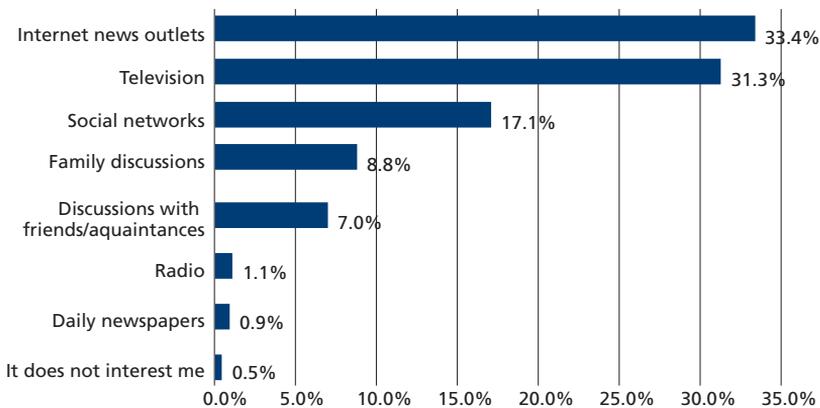
*are the most moving force in that circle, but we don't know how powerful we are, we do not know, we really don't know»*

(23-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«We are the independence generation aren't we? We are different from our older generation in that we were born in independence and if we say that nothing has changed and become disillusioned and so on ... I do not agree with that, because it is us who will grow and become the heads of this state. It doesn't matter if you have a position or not, yes, you have to educate your child. The generation will change; nothing stays the same. If we are the independence generation, we were born in independence, then we must strive to create the country we desire»*

(27-year-old female, regional town.)

**Figure 3.8: What are your main sources of information with regard to current political events?**

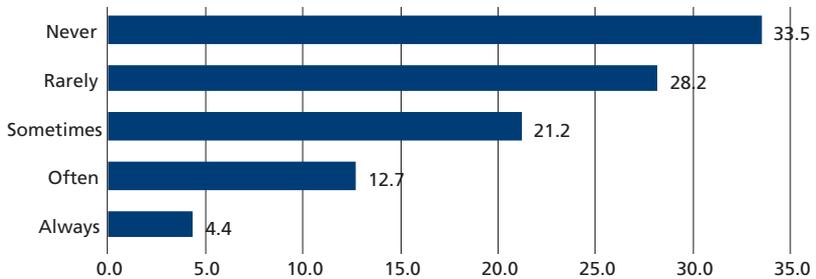


It is worth noting that only 32.5 per cent of the respondents watch political debates at least one or more times a week, but being politically active is definitely fashionable for 41 per cent of those questioned. For 50.5 per cent of the young people questioned, the Internet is the main source of information on political events: 33.4 per cent get their information from news media on the Internet and 17.1 per cent from social networks. Television, the traditional provider of state policies, is gradually losing its position as the main source of information (only 31.3 per cent consider it to be so). Radio and newspapers hardly serve as

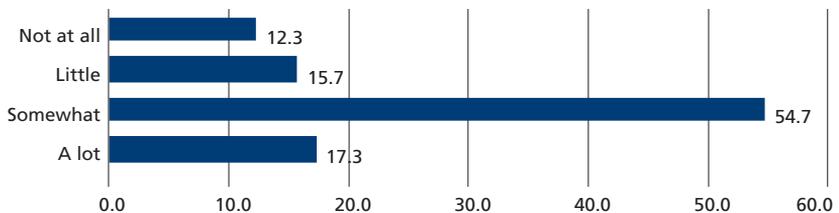
sources of information for young people (1.1 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively) (Figure 3.8)

As seen in Figure F7, 8.8 per cent of young people mainly get information on political developments from their family and 7 per cent from discussions with friends. It is interesting that only 4.4 per cent of respondents always discuss political topics with their parents, while 33.5 per cent insist that they never do and 28.2 per cent rarely do (Figure 3.9). Only 12.3 per cent note that their political views do not coincide with their parents' views at all (Figure 3.10).

**Figure 3.9: How often do you discuss politics with your parents?**



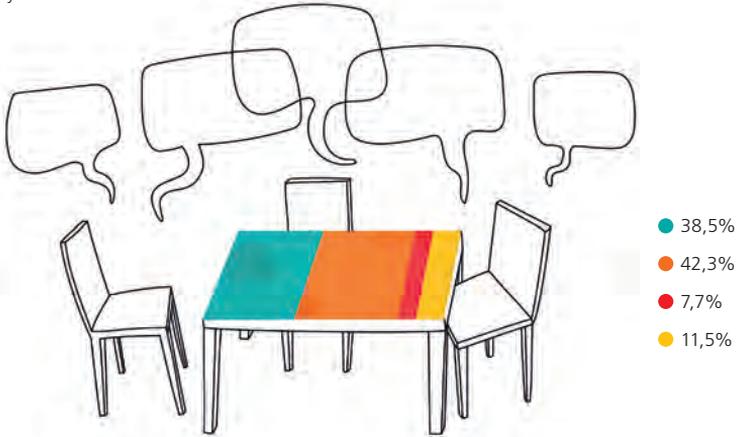
**Figure 3.10: To what extent are your political views and beliefs aligned with those of your parents?**



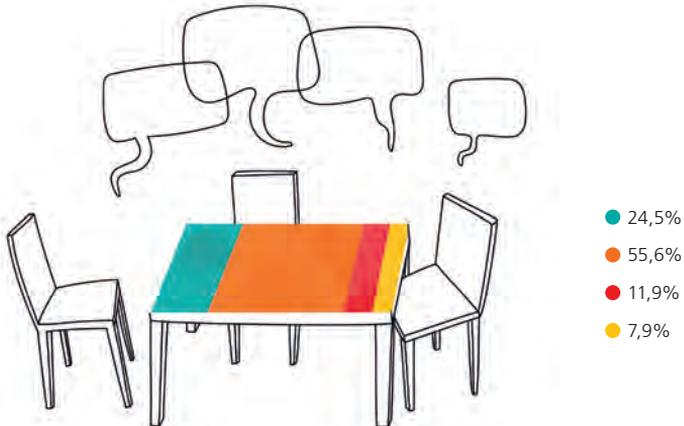
Moreover, a statistically significant correlation has been identified between the two variables mentioned above: ( $X^2=148.6$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.220$ :  $\rho=249^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In other words, the more frequently young people discuss political topics with their parents, the more they consider that their political views and those of their parents coincide (Figure 3.11).

### Figure 3.11: How often do you discuss politics with your parent/s?

Always



Often



How similar are your political views to those of your parents?

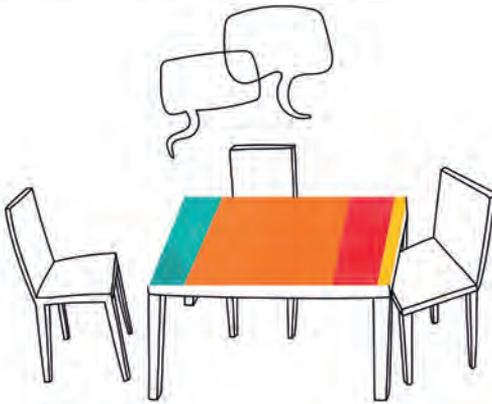
- A lot
- Somewhat
- Little
- Not at all

Sometimes



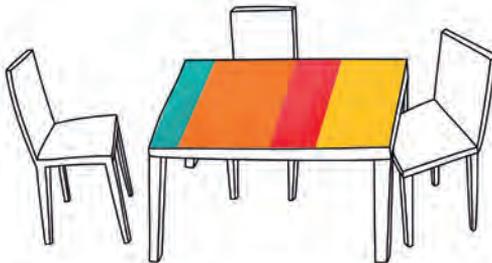
- 15,4%
- 67,1%
- 12,2%
- 5,3%

Rarely



- 15,4%
- 60,7%
- 18,6%
- 5,3%

Never



- 12,9%
- 37,5%
- 19,1%
- 30,5%

«For example, in my opinion, adults are interested in politics because on the whole they find out what is happening from the news, and they think more. In my opinion young people read a couple of things on the Internet—they have a look—many of them say, «we don't need this; let them do whatever they want. Let's get on with our business», while the adults sit and watch what is happening in the National Assembly»

(15-year-old female, village community).

«Discussions reach a peak probably during election periods—a little before and a little after. When someone is elected, passions calm down. I can remember my student years, when the current president was elected, our class was split into three parts: those who defended the president, those who derided him, and the third group who did not care what happened [laughs]. I don't even know what else to say, the topic of politics is not pleasant for me»

(28-year-old female, regional town).

«Elections must be healthy, fair ... really fair elections. The day that they are, we young people will have the right to talk about politics»

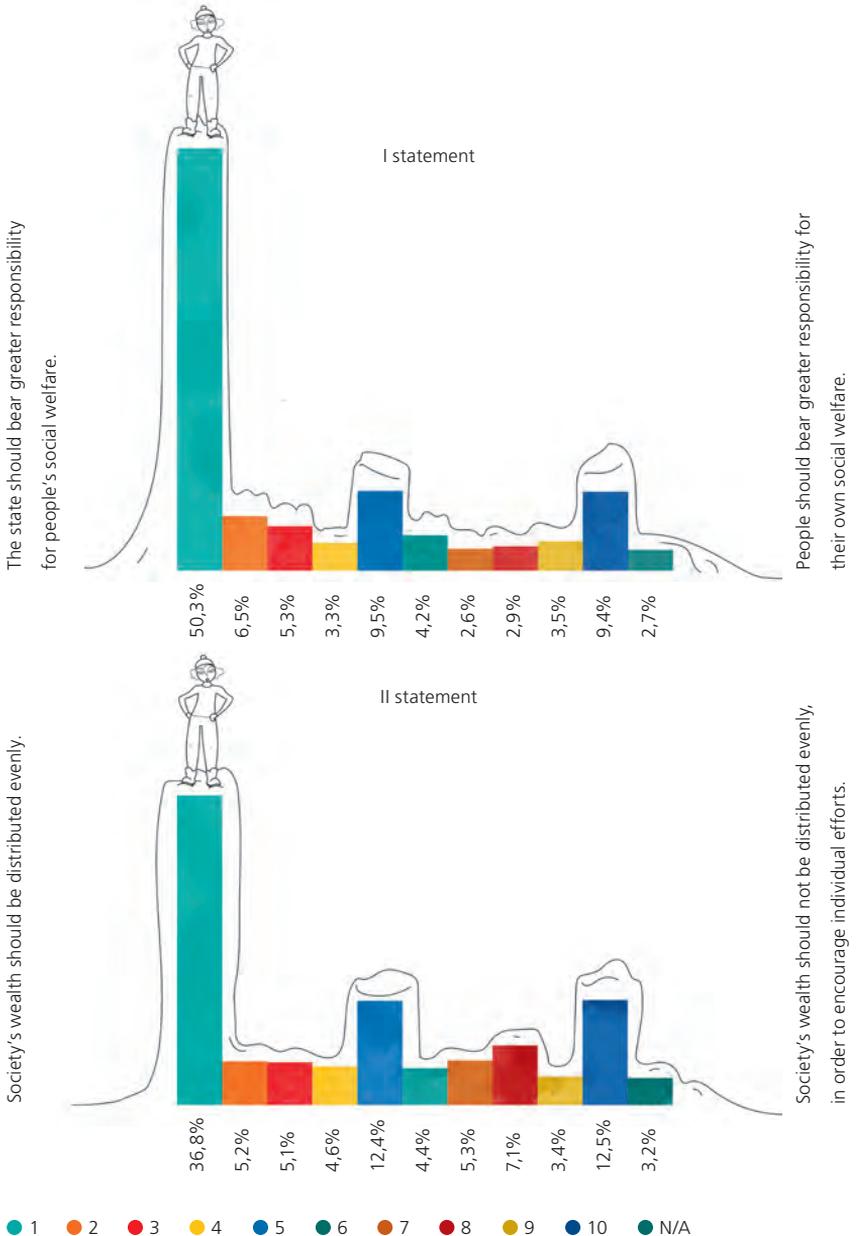
(24-year-old male, village community).

### Political Stances

A questionnaire was given to the youth with the four statements listed below, each with two sub-statements expressing opposing political stances—left-wing and right-wing. The two sub-statements were evaluated on a ten-point scale (1–5, closer to the first sub-statement; 6–10 closer to the second sub-statement). The overall picture of the answers can be seen in **Figure 3.12**.

- **I statement:** The state should bear greater responsibility for people's social welfare / People should bear greater responsibility for their own social welfare.
- **II statement:** Society's wealth should be distributed evenly / Society's wealth should not be distributed evenly, in order to encourage individual efforts.
- **III statement:** Increased share of state ownership in the economy / Increased private ownership in the economy.
- **IV statement:** Competition is dangerous. It reveals the worst qualities in people / Competition is a good thing. It stimulates industriousness and creates new ideas.

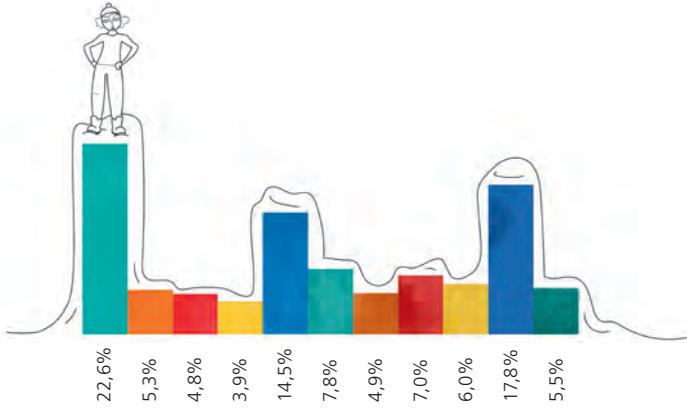
Figure 3.12: How would you place your views on this scale?



# Independence Generation

Increased share of state ownership in the economy.

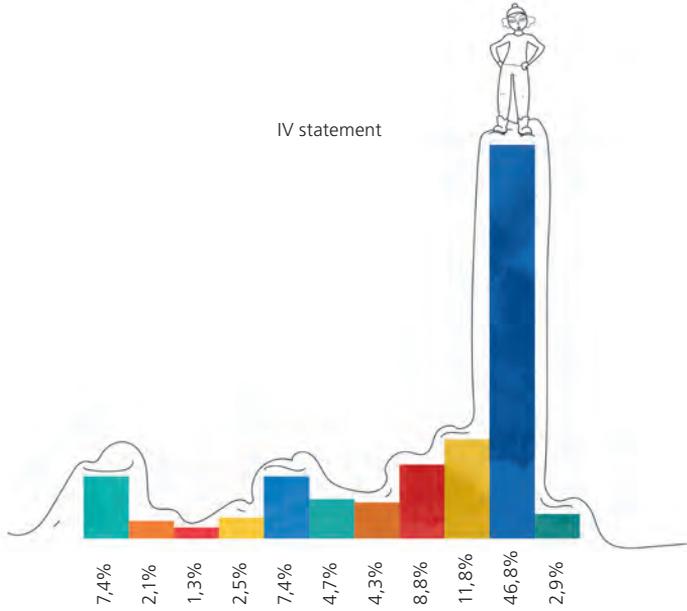
III statement



Increased private ownership in the economy.

Competition is dangerous. It reveals the worst qualities in people.

IV statement



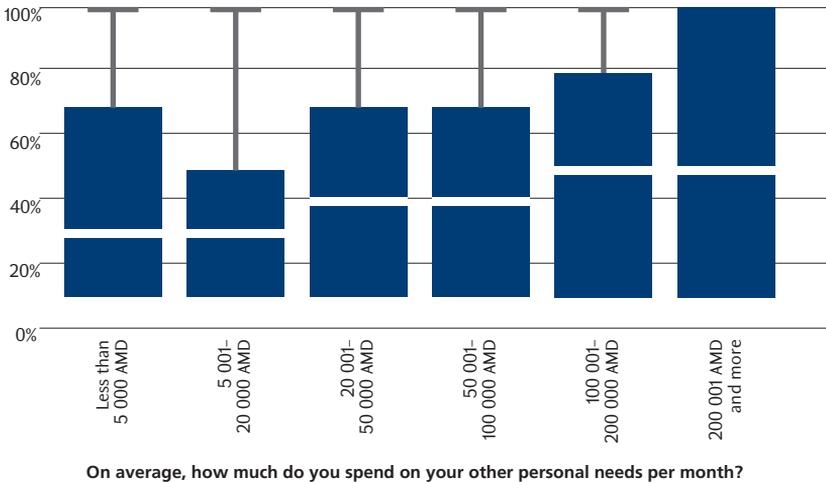
Competition is a good thing. It stimulates industriousness and creates new ideas.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- N/A

50.3 per cent of the respondents insist unequivocally that the state must bear greater responsibility for people’s social welfare, and only 9.4 per cent unequivocally agree that people must bear greater responsibility for their own social welfare. 36.8 per cent of the respondents are inclined towards the position that society’s wealth should be equally distributed. A further 15.2 per cent more adhere to that opinion to this or that extent. 12.5 per cent of those questioned are unequivocally opposed to that statement.

The position of the young people surveyed was distributed fairly equally between «left-wing», «moderate», and «right-wing» (32.7, 31.1, and 30.8 per cent respectively) in the classical sense of right-left dichotomy. Given that the modern left ideology acknowledges the necessity of competition, it is hard to clearly differentiate between the young people’s intentions towards the social order. Factually, 46.9 per cent considered competition within society to be a very good thing; only 7.4 per cent of those questioned absolutely opposed this.

**Figure 3.13: How would you categorise? Society’s wealth should/shouldn’t be equally distributed. (Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test<sup>3</sup>)**



<sup>3</sup> The Kruskal-Wallis H (1952) test—also called the «one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) on ranks»—is a rank-based nonparametric test used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable.

The young people's left- and right-wing views concerning the sub-statements—«Society's wealth should be distributed evenly / Society's wealth should not be distributed evenly, in order to encourage individual efforts»—are statistically related to their personal expenses. The statistical test ( $H(4)=11.580$ ;  $p=0.041$ ) showed that the more the youths' personal expenses decrease—due to socio-economic conditions meaning that they have less money to spend—the more they are inclined to say that society's wealth should be evenly distributed.

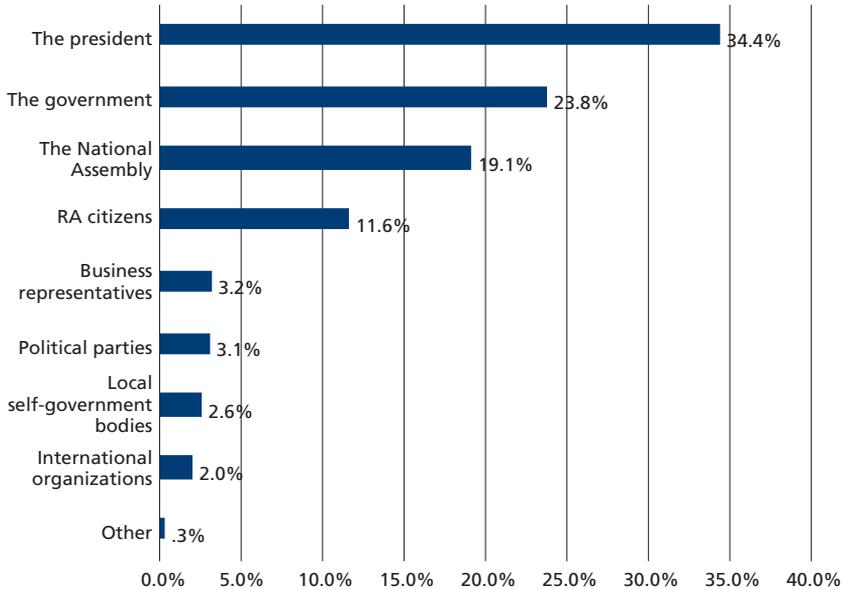
*«I think that I am interested in politics as much as it has to do with my pocket and social condition. The most important problem now in Armenia is probably the social situation»*

(29-year-old male, regional town).

### Development Problems and Challenges

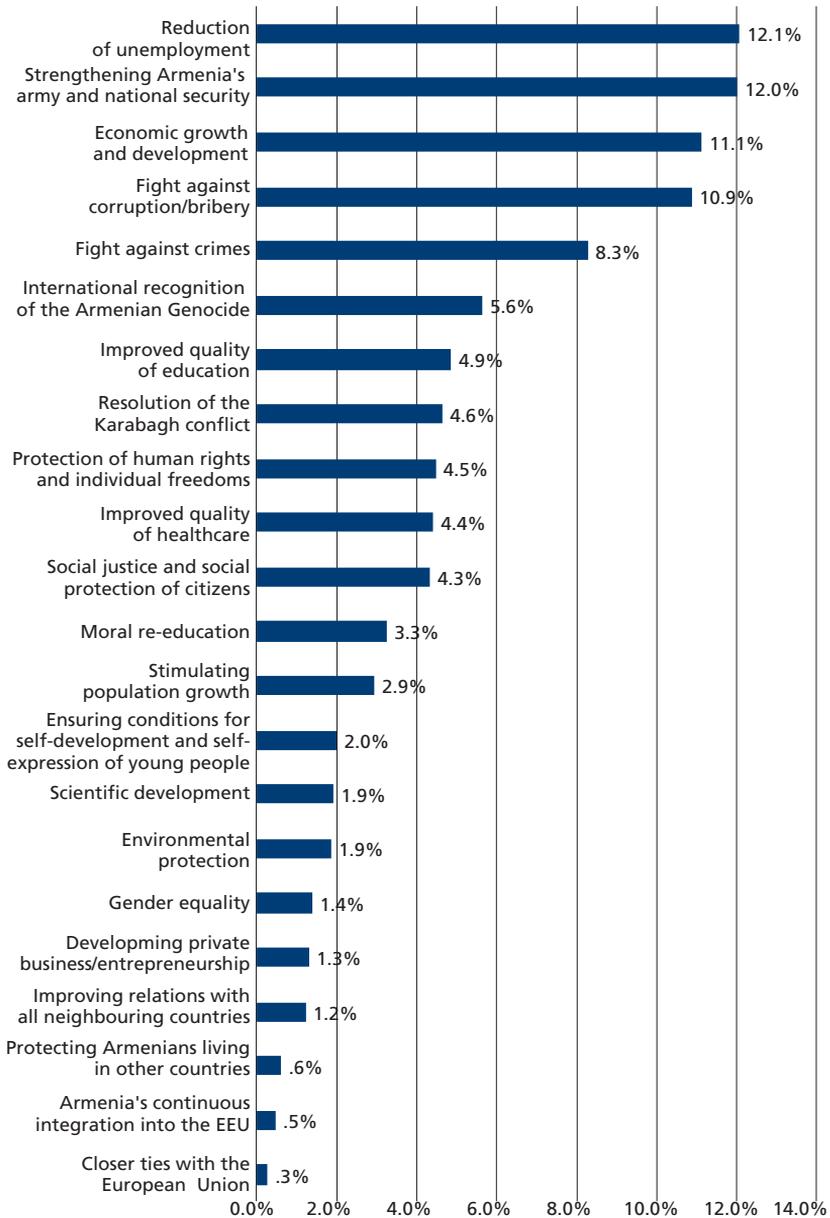
In general, the emphasis by the majority of the youth on the state's social responsibility is evident. This was reaffirmed when the respondents rated those responsible for improvements in the Armenian economy. The Armenian president was in first place (34.4 per cent); the Armenian government, second (23.8 per cent); and the NA, third (19.1 per cent) (**Figure 3.14**). The person considered to be most responsible for economic improvement is the Armenian president, while only 3.2 per cent of those questioned thought that representatives of private business were primarily responsible. On the one hand, this is the manifestation of the paternalism inherited from the older generation, and on the other hand, it is the result of the establishment of authoritarian democracy in the country. Simultaneously, the relatively high level of the sense of civic responsibility in the matter of improvement of the country's economic condition can be emphasised. According to 11.6 per cent of those questioned, Armenian citizens are also responsible for the enhancement of economic development. Thus, it can also be argued, that young people have a modern understanding of a responsible, accountable and transparent state, knowing that without responsible governance and citizenship, the situation of the Armenian economy will not improve.

Figure 3.14: Who is responsible for Armenia's economic development?



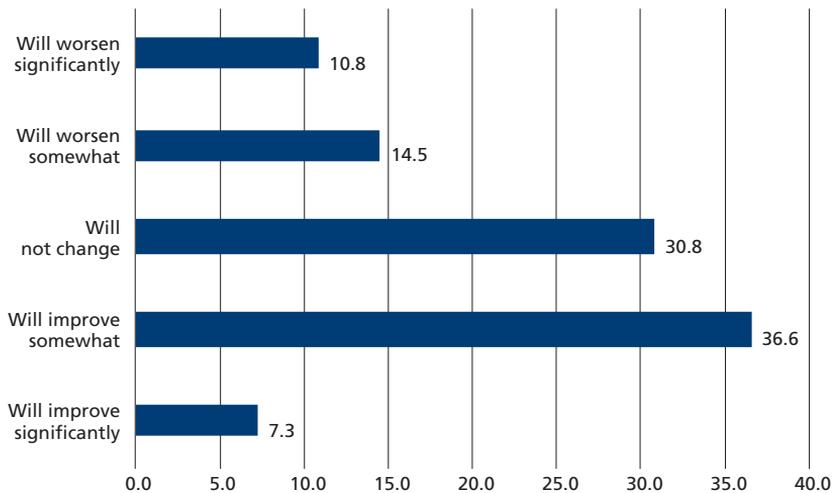
Furthermore, in the opinion of those questioned, the Armenian government should focus on the solution of the following problems: lowering unemployment (12.1 per cent); strengthening the Armenian army (12.0 per cent); stimulating economic growth (11.1 per cent); fighting against corruption (10.9 per cent); fighting against crime (8.3 per cent); achieving international recognition of the Armenian genocide (5.6 per cent); resolving the Karabakh conflict (4.6 per cent); protecting human rights (4.5 per cent); moral re-education (3.3 per cent). It is strange that only 2 per cent placed securing conditions for young people's self-development and self-expression on the list of priority issues. The respondents' level of environmental awareness was also low: only 1.9 per cent of them prioritised environmental protection (Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15: Which of the following should the Armenian government prioritise?



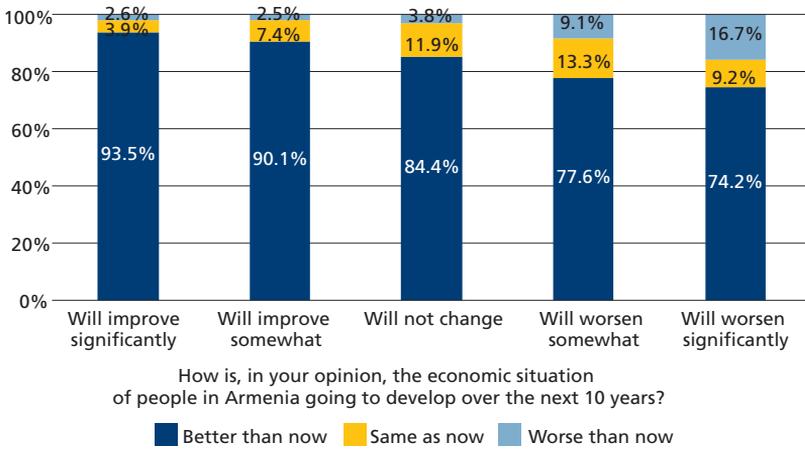
Despite mentioning socio-economic issues, young people in Armenia also have optimistic perceptions of the country's economic future. According to 7.3 per cent of those questioned, the country's economic situation will improve significantly in the coming ten years; according to 36.6 per cent, it will improve somewhat; according to 30.8 per cent, it will not change; and according to 25.3 per cent, it will worsen somewhat or to a significant extent (**Figure 3.16**).

**Figure 3.16: In your opinion, how will the economic situation of people in Armenia develop over the next ten years?**



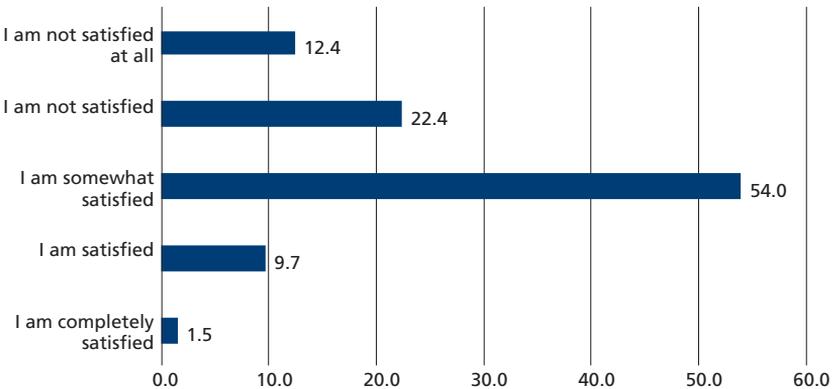
Moreover, a statistically significant relationship has been identified between the visualisation in the next ten years of the personal future of the young people questioned, and that of the economic condition of the country during that time ( $X^2=53.295$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.159$ ;  $\rho=.172^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, the more optimistic the visualisation of the economic condition of the future is, the more optimistic the visualisations of their personal future and vice versa (**Figure 3.17**).

Figure 3.17: What will your future be like in ten years?



The respondents’ satisfaction with the current level of democracy in Armenia is interesting in the context of current perceptions of the country’s political system. 34.8 per cent of those questioned are not satisfied, only 11.2 per cent are satisfied. The majority of the youth (54 per cent) are somewhat satisfied (Figure 3.18).

Figure 3.18: How are you satisfied with the state of democracy in Armenia in general?



*«The youth are disheartened. For example, when they were going to raise the price of electricity, they closed Baghramyan Street. Definitely, if they had kept it shut for a few more days, they would have achieved their goal. It's just that they get disheartened quickly. I am particularly interested in the methods of non-violent struggles, and I understand that the government has educated experts who have a command of all international political teachings and can use their knowledge, not to develop foreign affairs, but to manipulate us. Why do you think we failed during the events on Baghramyan? Firstly, because we had no strategy, and one of our coordinators sold out, halfway through ... [silence]»*

(25-year-old male, Yerevan).

Moreover, a statistically significant relationship has been identified between the satisfaction with the Armenian democracy and a) the youths' visualisation of their own future over the next ten years ( $X^2=22.810$ ,  $p=0.004$ , Cramer's  $V=.104$ ), and b) their visualisation of the country's future economic state ( $X^2=106.962$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.159$ ). The more satisfied the youth are with the level of Armenian democracy, the more optimistically they visualise their own future and that of the country's economy.

*«Everything happens twice, firstly in your mind and then in reality. We have to hope that it will be alright so that there will be positive changes in the country's condition»*

(18-year-old male, village community).

*«If the youth work together, they will achieve what they want—to a certain extent—but they will get there»*

(21-year-old male, Yerevan).

## Discussion

The attitudes of young people towards politics are explained in the context of their economic, social, and cultural capitals. They value politics and are interested in political affairs; yet political indifference is exhibited at the level of practical intentions. In fact, the higher their educational level, the less inclined they are to participate in elections.

Within Armenia's rural communities, the impact of kinship on youth is higher because the social control over the individual agency is incomparably higher in rural areas. This explains the more clear dispositions of rural youth towards voting for one political party or another. Here, the discussion is not about informed choices, but relates to a manifestation of clan solidarity. In broad terms, the number of politically active youth is not big, because young people think that their voices do not affect the major decision-making processes.

Such an exclusion (self-exclusion) of youth from political decision-making processes is attributed to post-Soviet societies, which is linked to several objective and subjective factors: faults in the legislation, indifference of authorities, lower rates of politically informed and active youth (Chuprov 2009: 137f). As a result, the Armenian political field becomes a space for struggles for authority, which leaves the supposedly most important social actors (the youth) marginalised and alienated (Bourdieu 1985). Even recent civic engagement initiatives for young people<sup>4</sup> were declared to be non-political, otherwise, the activists would lose mass support.

Apart from being a consequence of manipulations in elections, the low level of trust in elected political bodies is due to the «neither war, nor peace» situation of Armenian society, and the awakening of self-identification with state authorities directly contributes to the increase of behavioural uncertainties in social life. This was clear in the answers of the young respondents. When financial success is considered to be the major aim for everyone, but there are no legal ways of achieving this aim within society, deviant behaviour increases and value disorientation come into play.

In the condition of «neither war, nor peace», overcoming young people's uncertainty and insecurity is linked to the mythology of the «power of the strong hand», which leads to the development of the authoritarian democracy described through simple structures of communicational and social dispositions. Crisis and globalisation act in contrast to local self-governance and democratisation principles, decreasing youth's level of trust towards political institutions.

.....  
**4** (in several activities- The «Save Teghut», «Mashtotsi purak», «Not paying 150 drams», Electric Yerevan etc., see Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014). Armenian Civil Society after Twenty Years of Transition: Still Post-Communist? Yerevan: AUA.)

Disadvantaged youth tend to state that the public good has to be equally disseminated. Taking into account the fact that the political views of the majority of youth coincides with the political views of their parents, it becomes clear that the Soviet ideology of communism is reproduced in Armenia's independence years by the parents with less economic capital, through the dispositions of their children.



# PERCEPTION OF FOREIGN POLICY

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## Introduction

According to a 2014 survey, 51 per cent of the population in Armenia think that the country should strengthen its foreign political ties with both Europe and Russia, 34 per cent believe that ties should only be strengthened with Russia, and just 4 per cent believe that ties should only be strengthened with Europe (Civilitas Foundation 2011, Delcour 2015: 323). Thus, according to the survey, the public also approved the complementary foreign policy that the Armenian government conducts in its Euro-Russia relationships.

In essence, Armenia's involvement in either union is an issue of not only external stimuli and influences, but also a question of internal socio-economic issues, structural problems influencing foreign policy, and the position of different social classes (Delcour 2015: 317). According to 2015 European Parliament data, the European Union was Armenia's first trading partner (27 per cent), and Russia was the second largest partner (24.3 per cent). However, the September 3, 2013 decision by the Armenian president, not to sign the agreement of association with the European Union significantly changes the situation, because the money transfers from Armenians living in Russia, security concerns, and the country's dependence on Russia for energy are vital for Armenia (De Micco and European Parliament 2015: 20). It is indisputable that from the point of view of Armenia's democratisation, the EU's role has created serious bases for reform, but relations between Armenia and Europe continue to develop in the context of the Southern Caucasian region. The region is significantly influenced by the transnational dynamic and this affects the EU-Armenia membership as well. (Freire & Simão 2013). In this section, fundamental reference is made to the perception of Armenian foreign policy, stressing relations between Armenia and the EU as well as Armenia and Russia, as seen by the youth.

## Main Findings

- ▶ The majority of young people who are in favour of strengthening relations with the EU are also in favour of the statement that the preferred route is Armenian development within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU); in contrast, the majority of young people opposing the first statement are also opposed to this second statement.
- ▶ The majority of those in favour of strengthening relations with the EU are females, while those opposed are males. The quantitative data is also verified by the qualitative data.
- ▶ 57.4 per cent of the youth find that strengthening relations with the EU will endanger traditional national values. 54.5 per cent find that Armenia will be exploited economically by the EU; and according to 45.7 per cent, it will endanger Armenian sovereignty. Isolated incidents of anti-European mentality can be seen in the qualitative data.
- ▶ The majority of those in favour of strengthening relations with the EU are females. Youth in rural areas—unlike those in urban areas—consider it to be a precondition for faster development of the Armenian economy, for improving the Armenian quality of life and education, and for ensuring Armenia's security.
- ▶ The more that the personal monthly expenses—correspondingly also the incomes—of the youth decrease, the more they think that strengthening relations with the EU is a precondition for the protection of human rights.
- ▶ The youth with higher education—unlike those with middle or vocational education—consider strengthening relations with the EU to be the precondition for better employment opportunities. In contrast, young people with lower education consider it to be a precondition for better education and for Armenia's security.
- ▶ Regarding the consolidation of relations between Armenia and the EU, Armenia's «culpability» and non-compliance with European standards are listed as more important obstacles than the obstacles created by the EU.
- ▶ Young people in urban areas and those with higher education are more inclined to view relations between Armenia and Russia as an obstacle to strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU.

## Analysis

### International Integration Priorities

20.7 per cent of the young people questioned about Armenian foreign relations are unequivocally in favour of Armenia doing everything to consolidate its relationship with the EU, while for 16 per cent of them membership in the EEU is the most preferred course for Armenia's development.

As can be seen from the ten-point scale provided in **Figure 4.1**, most of them generally agree with the statements made. In particular, 62.8 per cent agree with the prospect of consolidating relationships between the EU and Armenia, while 56.9 per cent connect Armenian development with membership in the EEU.

Although placing the current perceptions of Armenian foreign policy development within the range of Russia-West (particularly European) poles is accepted, as can be seen from the survey findings, the positions held by the youth correlate between these two (Spearman's  $\rho=0.373$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This means that the majority of the young people in favour of the prospect of strengthening relations with the EU also agree with the statement that membership in the structure of the EEU is the most preferred route for Armenian development and vice versa; the majority against the first statement are also not in favour of the other statement. During foreign policy discussions in almost all of the focus group discussions (FGDs), the terms «Russia» and «Europe» were used as collective nouns whose meanings were not particularly clarified. During the discussions the young people confessed that they had insufficient information on the issue.

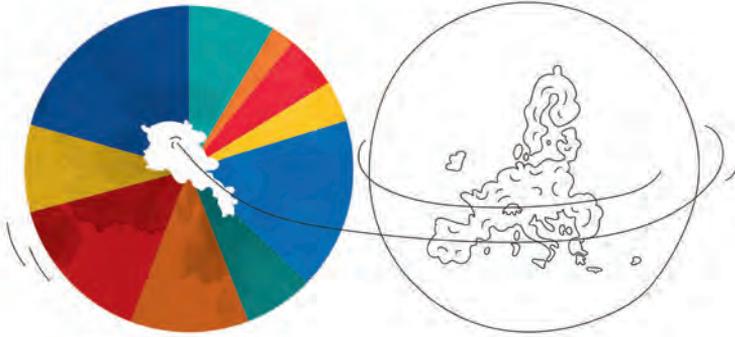
*«We hear things on the television, pick things up on social networks, and hear a little from our elders' conversations. There is nothing else that we can hear, understand, and follow in order to express our own opinions»*

(16-year-old male, village community).

Along with the lack of information, the issue of disinformation is also raised.

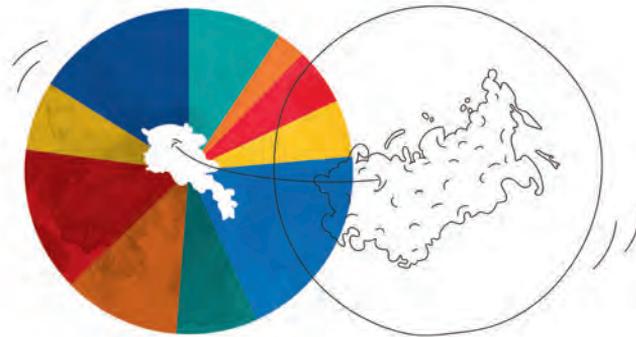
Figure 4.1

Armenia should do everything to establish closer relations with the European Union.



- 1 = 8,5%
- 2 = 2,3%
- 3 = 5,3%
- 4 = 4,1%
- 5 = 17,0%
- 6 = 6,9%
- 7 = 11,7%
- 8 = 15,0%
- 9 = 8,6%
- 10 = 20,7%

Membership in the Eurasian Economic Union is the most preferable route for Armenia's development.



- 1 = 9,3%
- 2 = 2,9%
- 3 = 5,7%
- 4 = 5,7%
- 5 = 19,6%
- 6 = 8,0%
- 7 = 11,5%
- 8 = 14,4%
- 9 = 6,9%
- 10 = 16,0%

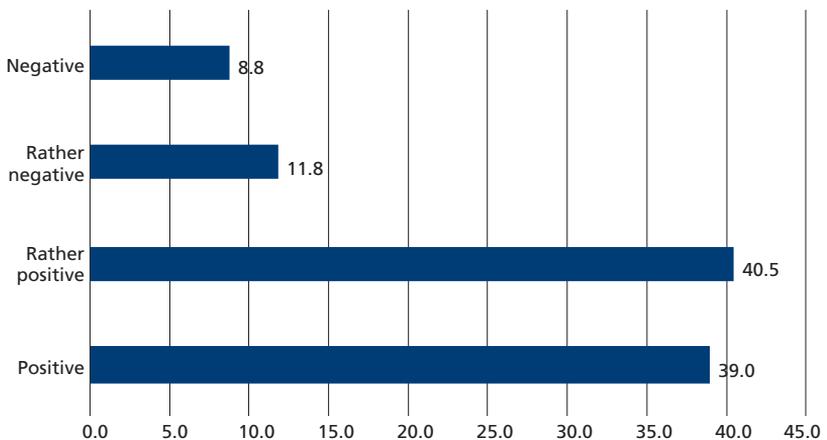
«For example, I read special news sites. There are journalists who spread false information. I have to read different opinions and try to shape my own opinion»

(25-year-old female, regional town).

This is also evident from the significant percentage responses characterised as «Difficulty Responding, Refusal to Respond» (DR/RR) in the quantitative findings (Figures 4.3; 4.6).

If Armenia's membership in the EEU is an existing fact, then current foreign policy relations between Armenia and the EU are more debatable. Thus, from this perspective it is important to notice that the majority of the young people questioned (79.5 per cent) consider the strengthening of ties with the European Union to be positive (Figure 4.2), and 63.4 per cent of them agree that Armenia must restore and continue the process of consolidation with the EU (Figure 4.3).

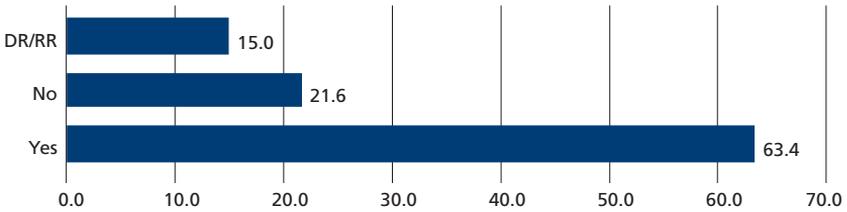
Figure 4.2: What is your attitude towards Armenia establishing closer relations to the European Union?



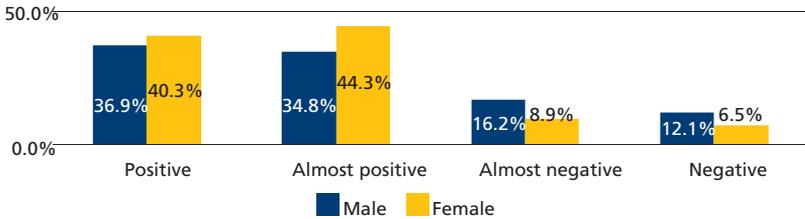
It is important to emphasise that a statistically significant association has been identified between these positions and the gender of those questioned. The majority of those in favour of strengthening relations with the EU are fe-

males, while those against are males (Figure 4.4  $X^2=26.909$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.160$ , Figure 4.5  $X^2=29.915$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.172$ ).

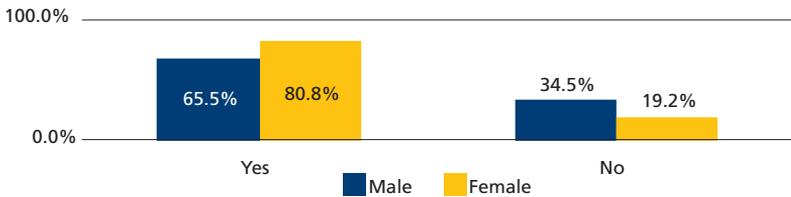
**Figure 4.3: Do you think that Armenia has to continue the process of getting closer to the European Union?**



**Figure 4.4: What is your attitude towards Armenia establishing closer relations to the European Union?**



**Figure 4.5: Do you think that Armenia has to continue the process of getting closer to the European Union?**



The quantitative findings presented above have been verified by qualitative findings. The males participating in the FGDs interpret Armenia's member-

ship in the EEU as an automatically granted, unavoidably present, and—from the point of view of Armenia’s foreign policy—rational event. They present Russia as a country that defends Armenia.

*«If we are in the EEU, Russia will defend us. Russia is a powerful country and will defend us, particularly in a tense military situation»*

(15-year-old male, village community).

*«Our economy will develop. You know what? After all, Russia is our strategic partner and that is linked to Armenia’s economy and why not, the strengthening of our military forces. I think it is more advantageous for us to be in the Eurasian Economy»*

(18-year-old male, village community).

It is interesting that when talking about the EEU, they only mention Russia and offer no qualifying information about the other countries. The males from the age group 21–29 discuss the advantages of Armenia’s membership in the EEU more objectively. In particular, they note that the liberalisation of customs taxes and the prospect of business development are promising.

*«The issue of joining the EEU ... the whole course of our history has shown that strengthening our ties to Russia is better than doing so to European countries because Russia has always helped us to some extent or other»*

(26-year-old male, Yerevan).

According to the FGD participants, Armenia is an isolated landlocked country and therefore good relations with Russia are fundamental to it.

*«It is expedient to be with Russia because our country is so weak and poor that as soon as it is integrated into Europe, Russia will suppress it. The majority of us Armenians are working in Russia now, our money comes from there, so from all aspects, from both the financial aspect and all aspects, Russia is the better option»*

(27-year-old male, regional town).

*«Let us not forget one thing: Russia’s largest military base in the region is here in Armenia, in Gyumri—the Russian army defends the whole border from Azerbaijan and Turkey. We have no alternative. In other words, if we*

*join the European Union, Russia will withdraw its troops and then—as it is we are landlocked a national security issue will arise. Whether we want to or not, we must stay under Russian domination, as a colony»*

(28-year-old male, regional town).

«*Putting it crudely, it is not in Russia's interest for a country under its domination to pull out and enter another organisation»*

(25-year-old male, Yerevan).

«*Even from a climatic or ideological point of view, we are closer to Russia»*

(22-year-old male, village community).

The female participants in the FGDs expressed pro-European opinions.

«*If it [Armenia] joins the Eurasian [union], the links with Russia will be better and soon Armenia will become a Russian colony, but if it joins the European [union], it will maintain its position, it may become stronger and the European countries will help Armenia. If our government changes, we may be closer to another nation, not Russia and not be dependent on Russia; the government plays a big role here»*

(16-year-old female, regional town).

«*If we don't join the European Union, we will seem like a puppet government to the Europeans—whatever Russia dictates, we will have to do. Now we are dependent on Russia. Let me give an example: Armenia could have accepted Iranian gas, but it didn't. It accepted Russian gas and again we looked bad in Europe's eyes»*

(23-year-old female, Yerevan).

«*If we had joined Europe, we would already have gender equality in Armenia»*

(23-year-old female, Yerevan.)

«*I think a lot about joining the European Union because the European Union gives a considerable amount of grants to our government, but in reality they skim off those grants and absolutely nothing is being done about the corruption—our systems are corrupt. Secondly, it [Armenia] is not a demo-*

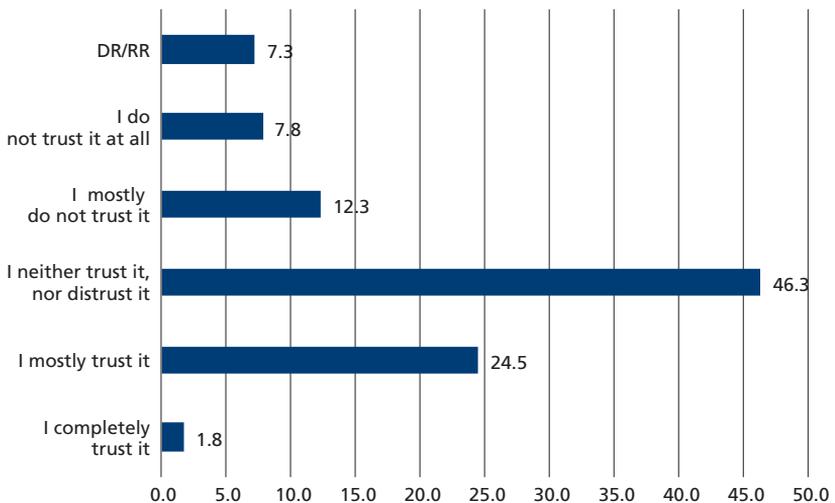
*cratic country, rights are not protected, and we know that one of the most important values for the European Union is democracy»*

(21-year-old female, Yerevan).

## Problems of International Integration

According to the youth questioned, Armenian foreign policy is not the primary sector that the government should be focusing on. In particular, only 0.8 per cent consider strengthening relations with the EU to be a priority issue for the Armenian government. Almost the same picture can be seen in the case of integration with the EEU; 1.4 per cent consider integration to be a priority issue for the government.

**Figure 4.6: How much do you trust EU?**



It is interesting that 46.3 per cent of the young people questioned are undecided on the issue of trusting the EU, 23 per cent of them trust the EU, and 20.1 per cent do not trust it (Figure 4.6). Moreover, the trust in the EU correlates with the youth being in favour of strengthening relations with EU ( $X^2=251,874$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.509$ ) and with the positive attitude towards this position

( $X^2=359.524$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.343$ ). It should be noted that the young people undecided on the issue of trust in the EU are also generally inclined to respond positively towards the prospect of strengthening Armenian relations with the EU (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7

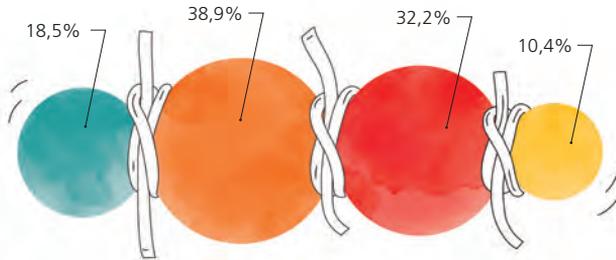
How much do you trust the EU?					
	Completely trust it	Mostly trust it	Neither trust it, nor distrust it	Mostly distrust it	Completely distrust it
<b>How do you feel about strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU?</b>					
Positively	90.5%	56.1%	34.3%	26.6%	18.8%
Mostly positively		39.6%	49.3%	27.3%	13.8%
Mostly negatively		1.4%	12.4%	32.4%	16.3%
Negatively	9.5%	2.8%	4.1%	13.7%	51.3%
<b>Do you think that Armenia should continue the process of strengthening relations with the EU?</b>					
Yes	100.0%	95.4%	77.8%	47.2%	19.2%
No		4.6%	22.2%	52.8%	80.8%

The problem of trust in the EU is also expressed by youth when presenting the dangers of strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU. In particular, 57.4 per cent of respondents find that strengthening relations with the EU will endanger traditional national values, 54.5 per cent find that Armenia will be exploited economically by the EU, and 45.7 per cent think closeness will endanger Armenian sovereignty (Figure 4.8).

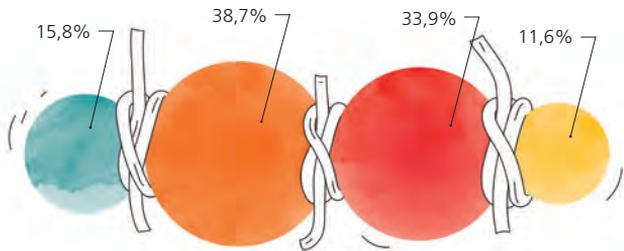
An anti-Europe mentality was noticed amongst the FGD participants. This was particularly seen with regard to European values on gender equality, widespread atheism in Europe (according to them), inequality between the economies of European countries and that of Armenia, the good relationship between European countries and Turkey, the events in Ukraine, and the current military issues in the region. Cultural differences were also mentioned.

**Figure 4.8: Strengthening ties with the EU will...**

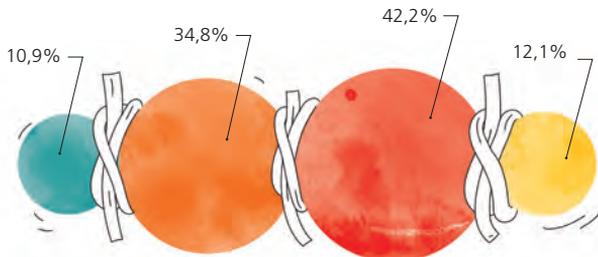
... endanger Armenian national-traditional values.



... economically exploit Armenia.



... endanger the sovereignty of the RA.



● I completely agree    ● I mostly agree    ● I mostly disagree    ● I completely disagree

«Europeans are cold; there is no warmth in them»

(25-year-old female, regional town).

«Until our economic situation improves, we will not be able to draw comparisons between Armenia and Europe. I emphasise our economic situation and wages. If these improve and are at a normal level, maybe we will understand them, but now Armenia is isolated from the European lifestyle. It is possible that the European countries will make room for us, but as a colony, and we will not progress in any way, but this [Armenia] is simply a link for them [European countries] to promote their actions»

(27-year-old female, regional town).

The anti-Europe mentality expressed in the age group 14–20 is due to relations between Europe and Turkey. It is specifically noted, that:

«We cannot be led by those European things, because many European countries have good relations with Turkey. It is better with Russia. Many European countries have strategic links with Turkey and are closer to Turkey, and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and Turkey make false declarations about Armenia and those countries who support Turkey and Azerbaijan are given a wrong impression about Armenia. It is less dangerous to be with Russia»

(17-year-old male, regional town).

The Ukrainian case has left a mark on the perceptions of the youth. For example, they say:

«No, that European Union is not a good thing. Look at what happened to Ukraine»

(26-year-old male, regional town).

«For example, if the question of Karabakh did not exist, Armenia would strive to join the European Union, but there are issues of security»

(28-year-old female, Yerevan).

Here an interesting qualitative observation can be made related to the fact that the risks of strengthening relations with the EU are mostly accepted by young people who are negatively disposed towards that process, while young people who hold a positive stance are split into two groups: those who «accept» and those who «do not accept» the risks (**Figure 4.9**).

Figure 4.9:

How do you feel about strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU?		Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree
	<b>Will endanger Armenian national-traditional values</b>				
	Positive	14.1%	34.8%	35.5%	15.6%
	Mostly positive	13.1%	40.8%	38.8%	7.3%
	Mostly negative	26.5%	50.4%	17.9%	5.1%
	Negative	51.1%	27.3%	13.6%	8.0%
	<b>Will endanger Armenian sovereignty</b>				
	Positive	8.2%	30.4%	42.8%	18.6%
	Mostly positive	5.6%	35.2%	50.3%	8.9%
	Mostly negative	17.4%	52.2%	26.1%	4.3%
	Negative	36.8%	31.0%	24.1%	8.0%
	<b>Will lead to Armenia's economic exploitation by the EU</b>				
	Positive	14.0%	31.5%	37.8%	16.7%
	Mostly positive	9.2%	43.6%	37.7%	9.5%
Mostly negative	23.6%	48.2%	25.5%	2.7%	
Negative	46.4%	33.3%	10.7%	9.5%	

Do you think Armenia should continue the process of strengthening relations with the EU	<b>Will endanger Armenian national-traditional values</b>				
	Yes	12.2%	36.4%	39.4%	12.0%
	No	38.3%	41.7%	14.2%	5.8%
	<b>Will endanger Armenian sovereignty</b>				
	Yes	6.5%	30.6%	48.5%	14.4%
	No	24.1%	43.6%	24.9%	7.5%
	<b>Will lead to Armenia's economic exploitation by the EU</b>				
	Yes	10.3%	35.8%	39.8%	14.1%
	No	32.5%	42.1%	18.4%	7.0%

Referring to the future possibilities of strengthening relations with the EU, those in favour completely agree that it will contribute to better education

(42.3 per cent); the creation of better job opportunities (36.4 per cent); travelling and making new friends (36.0 per cent); raising the quality of life in Armenia (31.5 per cent); the protection of human rights (31.4 per cent); faster development of the Armenian economy (30.1 per cent); ensuring Armenian security (25.6 per cent); faster Armenian democratisation (21.2 per cent); tolerant attitudes towards people who are different (18.1 per cent). It is important to note that most of the young people questioned think that strengthening relations with the EU will not increase tolerant attitudes towards people who are different (34.3 per cent) or contribute to ensuring the security of Armenia (28.5 per cent), while 19.9 per cent find that the strengthening relations with the EU will not contribute to faster Armenian democratisation.

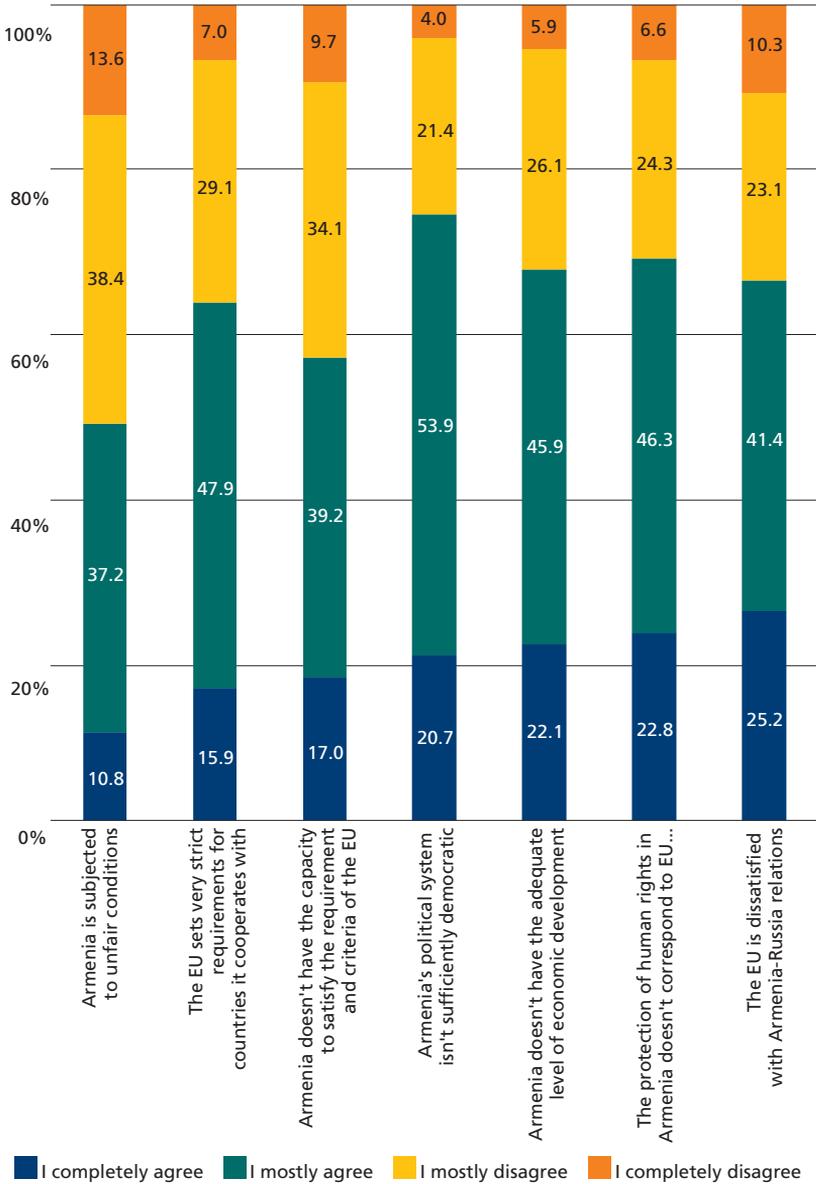
Statistically reliable associations have been identified between the age, gender, personal expenses, and economic situation of the families of the youth who are in favour of strengthening relations with the EU, and the positions expressed concerning the benefits of strengthening relations with the EU. Males (more than females) consider the strengthening of relations with the EU to be an opportunity for travel and making new friends ( $X^2=14.388$ ,  $p=0.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.139$ ). Those in rural areas (as opposed to urban areas) consider it to be a precondition for faster development of the economy in Armenia ( $X^2=14.089$ ,  $p=0.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.137$ ), improving the quality of life in Armenia ( $X^2=8.183$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.105$ ), better education ( $X^2=8.837$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.109$ ), and ensuring Armenia's security ( $X^2=15.594$ ,  $p=0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.146$ ). The more the personal monthly expenses (correspondingly also the incomes) of the youth decrease, the more they consider the strengthening of relations with the EU to be a precondition for the protection of human rights ( $X^2=27.136$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.110$ ). Young people from families with higher incomes consider the strengthening of relations with the EU to be a precondition for faster economic development in Armenia ( $X^2=26.357$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.109$ ). Unemployed youth, unlike those who work, consider it a precondition for tolerant attitudes towards people who are different ( $X^2=10.114$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.118$ ), better employment opportunities ( $X^2=9.521$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.113$ ), better education ( $X^2=14.339$ ,  $p=0.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.139$ ), and Armenia's security ( $X^2=13.157$ ,  $p=0.004$ , Cramer's  $V=.134$ ). The youth with higher education, unlike those with middle or vocational education, consider it to be the precondition for better employment opportunities ( $X^2=9.809$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.114$ ). In contrast, young people with lower education consider it a precondition for better education

( $X^2=16.521$ ,  $p=0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.149$ ) and Armenia's security ( $X^2=22.552$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.175$ ).

The following were identified as obstacles to strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU: the political system in Armenia is not sufficiently democratic (74.6 per cent); human rights protection in Armenia does not correspond to the EU requirements (69.1 per cent); Armenia does not have an adequate level of economic development (68 per cent); the EU is dissatisfied with Armenia-Russia relations (66.6 per cent); the EU sets strict requirements for its partner countries (63.8 per cent); Armenia does not have the capacity to fulfil EU requirements (56.2 per cent); unfair conditions have been set for Armenia, which *makes a myth of the officially accepted course of Armenia's Europeanisation* (48 per cent) (**Figure 4.10**).

Moreover, youth in urban areas ( $X^2=8.667$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.0100$ ) and those with higher education ( $X^2=8.789$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.100$ ) are more inclined to view Armenia-Russia relations as an obstacle to strengthening relations between Armenia and the EU. On the list of identified obstacles, Armenia's «fault» and the non-compliance with EU standards are more significant than the obstacles created by the EU. The scepticism about the establishment of relations between Armenia and the EU in the age group 21–29 is expressed with reference to the absence of democracy in Armenia, to it not being established, and to Armenia being weaker from the economic and human resources point of view.

Figure 4.10: Please specify which of the following are complicating the collaboration between Armenia and the EU?



*«The EU supports us, but the problem is how much we take. How much of what we take serves its purpose? What they offer is strange to us, we can't adopt it»*

(26-year-old female, regional town).

*«Let's say we do take something or other from the European legal framework—women's rights, equality. These are good things that are right, but we, our government ... it is not understood here»*

(29-year-old female, regional town).

In the qualitative findings, with regard to joining either union, what is significant is the perception of «helping Armenia», which demonstrates signs of the «small country» syndrome.

*«Well, we are a small country. However much we say we are independent, what can a state with a history of only 20 years do? And in this case, Russia's help is our only hope»*

(18-year-old male, village community).

*«Let's accept that we are a weak nation, to be more specific, our government is very weak, and some country or other must be by our side so that we can defend our rights or receive help»*

(16-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«I think that if Armenians cease their cooperation and link to Russia, we will, putting it crudely, be destroyed—we have no backing»*

(25-year-old male, regional town).

## Discussion

In terms of foreign policy, most interesting was the orientation of youth in Armenia on the issue of the EU and EEU.

For the youth, neither the logic of the ongoing negotiations with the EU, nor the reasons for membership in the EEU are clear. They say that they are not sufficiently informed. Nevertheless, the majority of the youth are in favour of both strengthening relations with the EU and becoming a member of the

EEU, expressing the logic of the country's complementary foreign policy that the Armenian authorities have adopted (Delcour 2015). Such an orientation by the youth on this issue expresses the reality that, for Armenia, the choice of either side is equivalent to a loss (De Micco 2015). On the one hand, the EU is Armenia's largest trading partner (Ibid: 20), and on the other hand, Russia is Armenia's ally in security matters—which are still urgent in the context of the Armenian-Azerbaijan battle in April 2016 and Turkey's continuing blockade of Armenia.

In the common perception of the youth, strengthening relations with the EU endangers Armenian sovereignty, which is also dependent on Russia. On the other hand, the worry exists that Armenia will be economically exploited by the EU and traditional, Armenian values will be threatened. «Economic exploitation» was attributed to the fact that the developed countries take ownership of a country's resources when they enter the market as superpowers. This expressed young people's fears about economic drivers outside of the country. As for traditional values, these were primarily seen to be held in the conservative Armenian family model, which does not typically accept gender equity, homosexuality, and norms associated with freedom of choice in this respect. Young people also see risks to Armenian sovereignty in the EEU membership: in particular, they think that sovereignty might decrease in the immediate geopolitical context and the country will be de facto colonised by Russia. For instance, the recent Russian economic crisis has raised concerns on the possible decrease in remittances to Armenia (see De Micco 2015: 20). Those in favour of integration in the EEU consider the process to be a means to preserve the common socio-cultural space that has existed with Russia for around two centuries, while the Armenian public and the youth themselves are not well informed about the actual EEU integration process (Manukyan 2013). At the same time, the youth in Armenia emphasise «distance» in the sense of compliance with criteria of the EU socio-cultural space.

In the context of the EU-EEU alternative, the orientation of different groups of Armenian youth can be differentiated. Their opinions and orientation are affected by gender, age, personal expenses, and the economic status of their families, which once again proves that perceptions about the country's foreign policy are shaped within the context of internal socio-economic and socio-cultural developments. It is noteworthy that the majority of participants in

favour of strengthening relations with the EU are female, while male participants generally have a pro-Russian orientation. This is probably due to the issue of migrant work in Russia, which is of greater interest to the males.



# CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

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## Introduction

Youth are more vulnerable in the modern world when transitioning from one social status to the other—for example, looking for work and working after graduating from university (see Gray 2007: 407). According to analysts, in today's society, in the «individualisation» of social risks, the acquisition of corresponding defensive skills is more essential for the youth (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Every fourth young person is working in the «shadow sector», meaning that they do not have any guarantee of labour protection as set out in the labour law (Manukyan et al. 2012: 34f). The same study shows that the slightest stance on the absolute value of emigration is held by youth (up to 35 per cent), who see an improvement in the state policy on poverty reduction (ibid: 91). In other words, the youth who believe that state guarantees exist are less inclined to emigrate.

In this section, an analysis will be made of the findings on the satisfaction of youth in Armenia with their lifestyle, their attitudes towards the future, the societal risks they come across, and in particular, their perception of emigration.

The most recent studies conducted in the South Caucasus indicate that youth movements in the region are not just isolated protests, but also long-term struggles that have matured in a socially unfavourable, undesirable reality (Beacháin & Abel 2010). Indeed, the preconditions of social exclusion are not only poverty, low income, and societal disadvantage, but also the interconnection of social issues—being unemployed, prejudice, lack of education (abilities and skills), poor socio-economic conditions and so on—which are vividly expressed (Social Exclusion Unit 2004: 14). Not having enough experience and historically established practices, specific different structures and traditions of civil society, the independent Armenian state has not provided genuinely

equal opportunities for different social groups—including young people—to achieve their aims. The socially unjust situation creates certain anxieties, makes the prospects uncertain for the youth, and forces them to tie their plans for the future to moving abroad.

### Main Findings

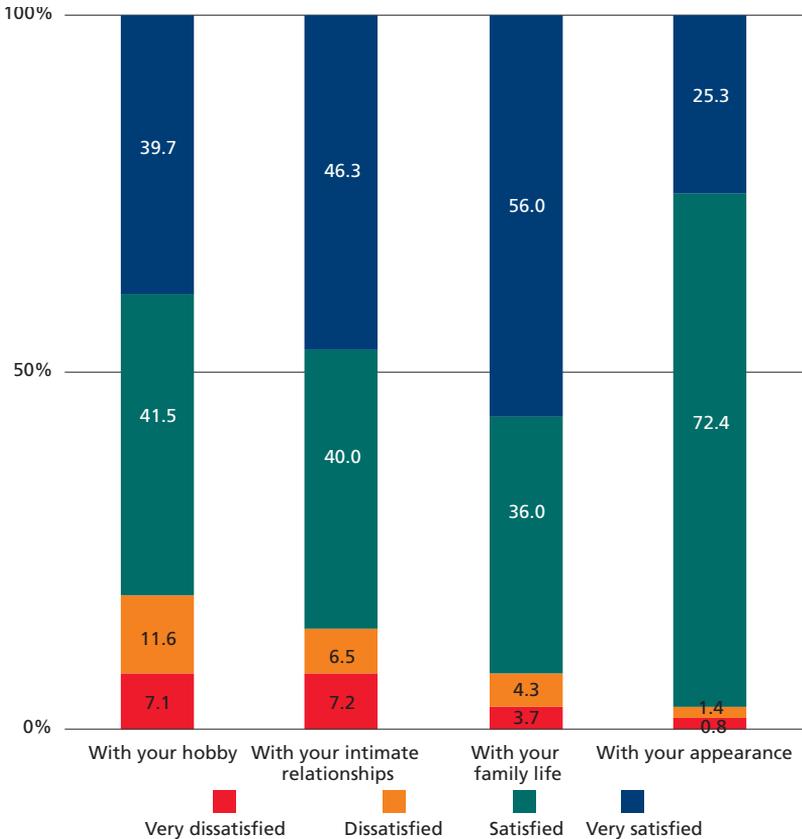
- ▶ The lower the economic status of the family, the less the youth are satisfied with their family life.
- ▶ Those studying in any educational institution whatsoever are less satisfied with their intimate relationships than those who are not studying.
- ▶ Those studying in any educational facility whatsoever are more optimistic about the future than those who are not studying.
- ▶ Parallel to the increase in age of the youth, pessimistic attitudes to the future increase. Parallel to the increase in age, unemployment, poverty, emigration, corruption, and the low level of law enforcement are further stressed as urgent social problems, whereas the environment is perceived as an urgent issue in the lower age group.
- ▶ The less youth spend on their personal needs and the lower the social status of their families, the more pessimistic their views about the future.
- ▶ Youth place less importance on the problems of health, environment, and general quality of life.
- ▶ More females want to move to another town/village in Armenia than males. Place attachment is particularly weaker in young women in urban areas and stronger in young men in rural areas.
- ▶ Improvement in the quality of life was given as the main reason for emigration by those wanting to go to the US (50 per cent); second, by those going to EU countries (44.9 per cent); and third, by those wanting to go to Russia (34.7 per cent).
- ▶ With regard to those who leave for the purpose of receiving a better education the numbers are as followed: US (24.2 per cent), Europe (18 per cent), and Russia (10.9 per cent). This picture changes in the case of those leaving to find broader opportunities for employment; Russia is in first place (54.5 per cent), followed by EU countries (37.1 per cent), and the US (25.8 per cent).
- ▶ Male participants more frequently prefer Russia for emigration, while female participants prefer the US.

## Analysis

### Satisfaction with Life

Study findings show that the majority of the youth are satisfied with their appearance (97.7 per cent), family life (92.0 per cent), intimate relationships (86.4 per cent), and hobby<sup>5</sup> (81.2 per cent) (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: How satisfied are you?

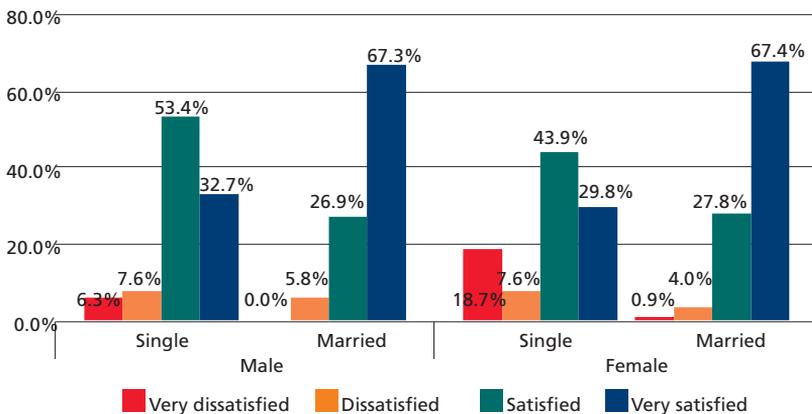


<sup>5</sup> The questions on satisfaction with family life, intimate relationships, and occupation were answered by respondents over the age of 18 (N=850).

The satisfaction of the youth with their intimate relationships, family life, and occupation are mutually correlated: the more satisfied they are with their family life, the more they are satisfied with their intimate relationships (Spearman's  $\rho=0.491^{**}$ ) and occupation (Spearman's  $\rho=0.540^{**}$ ). On the other hand, the more they are satisfied with their intimate relationships, the more they are satisfied with their occupation (Spearman's  $\rho=0.393^{**}$ ).

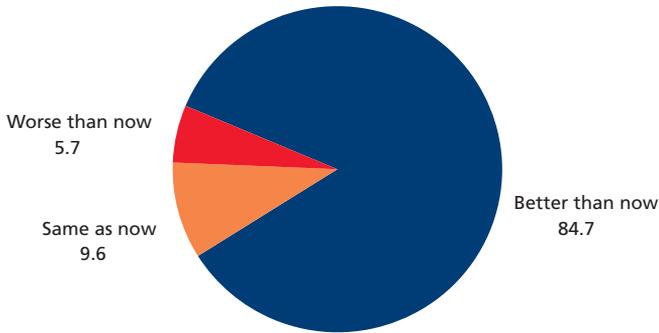
The indicators of the youth's satisfaction with life have a statistically significant association with other variables; in particular, the lower the family's economic status, the less the satisfaction with their family life ( $X^2=37.304$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=0.127$ ). Employed young people are more satisfied with their occupation than those who are unemployed ( $X^2=22.360$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=0.170$ ). Those studying in any educational facility whatsoever are less satisfied with their intimate relationships than those who are not studying ( $X^2=10.931$ ,  $p<.01$ , Cramer's  $V=0.125$ ). The level of satisfaction in intimate relationships increases along with the increase in age ( $X^2=26.213$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=0.138$ ). Those who are married are more satisfied with their intimate relationships and family life than those who are single ( $X^2=94.806$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=0.375$ ,  $X^2=14.718$ ,  $p=0.02$ , Cramer's  $V=0.140$ , respectively). Furthermore, single women are the most dissatisfied with their intimate relationships (26.3 per cent) (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: How satisfied are you with your intimate relationships?



The majority of the young people questioned are optimistic about their future. The following responses were given to the question of how they see their future in ten years: «better than now» (84.7 per cent); «the same as now» (9.6 per cent); «worse than now» (5.7 per cent) (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3: How do you see your future in ten years?**



A statistically significant association has been identified between the youth's vision of the future and their age, whether or not they are studying in any educational institution, the size of their monthly personal expenses, and the family's economic status (Figure 5.4). As the youth grow older, pessimistic attitudes about the future increase ( $X^2=33.296$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.123$ ). Those studying in any educational institution whatsoever ( $N=589$ ) have a more optimistic picture of the future than those who are not studying ( $N=611$ ) ( $X^2=33.131$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.173$ ). The less the youth spend on meeting their personal needs, and the lower the family's social status, the more pessimistic their attitudes are about the future ( $X^2=23.439$ ,  $p=.009$ , Cramer's  $V=.103$ ;  $X^2=44.795$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.143$  respectively).

The qualitative study showed that, particularly amongst the males, there were numerous fears related to having a steady income in Armenia. These fears are directly linked to social injustice and a monopolistic economy.

**Figure 5.4: In your opinion, what will be your future be like in ten years?**

	Better than now	The same as now	Worse than now
<b>Age in years</b>			
14–17	88.5%	9.1%	2.4%
18–21	87.5%	6.4%	6.0%
22–25	85.8%	10.2%	4.0%
26–29	74.9%	13.2%	11.9%
<b>Are you studying in any educational institution at present?</b>			
Yes	90.8%	6.5%	2.7%
No	78.6%	12.7%	8.7%
<b>How much do you spend on average per month for your other personal needs?</b>			
Up to 5 000 AMD	78.9%	21.1%	0%
5 001–20 000 AMD	80.3%	12.1%	7.5%
20 001–50 000 AMD	84.8%	9.9%	5.2%
50 001–100 000 AMD	87.9%	7.5%	4.6%
100 001–200 000 AMD	83.4%	8.6%	8.0%
200 001 AMD or more	92.0%	0%	8.0%
<b>Which of the following best describes the financial condition of your household?</b>			
The sum is insufficient for buying food	71.0%	12.9%	16.1%
The sum is sufficient for buying food, but not for buying clothes	66.2%	18.5%	15.4%
The sum is sufficient for buying food and clothes, but not for buying expensive items	82.1%	10.8%	7.1%
We can afford to buy certain expensive items, (for example, a television, or washing machine)	89.4%	7.1%	3.4%
We can afford to buy expensive items, go on summer vacation, and buy a car, but we cannot buy an apartment.	93.0%	6.2%	0.8%
We can even buy an apartment.	84.6%	15.4%	0%

«One of us dreams of driving a good car. Another dreams of owning a good phone. Another dreams of having a good business and that is not ambition,

*it is a dream for the young, because you cannot create that in Armenia—your own thing. It simply can't be done»*

(20-year-old male, village community).

*«90 per cent in Armenia are monopolists who, when they see that you want to do something, and see that you are growing, the <higher-ups> slap the back of your neck, saying, <Hey, haven't you grown a little too much?>»*

(26-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«A person has achieved this much, but has not seen any financial aid or support from the state, so that he can expand his business. That small business could turn into an enormous company sometime soon, have many employees, become a workplace, but it doesn't and he becomes disillusioned. I mean, there is a great deal of disillusionment» (28-year-old, Yerevan).*

*«We think that perhaps we could do some good for our country, set up a business, do something and make our livelihood from that business. But the taxes are high, we can't. We don't have that much money ... the state doesn't let you live»*

(23-year-old male, regional town).

*«The taxes should be reduced for some time, say, for two years, so that developing firms or developing businesses can grow»*

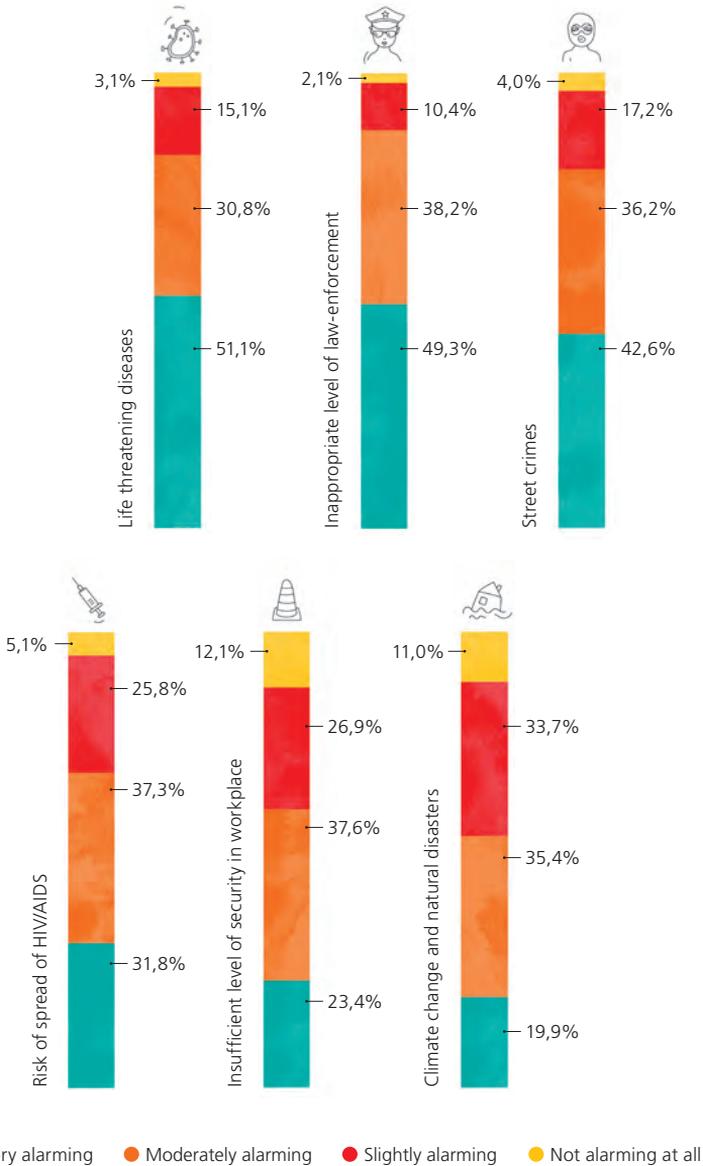
(29-year-old male, Yerevan).

## Societal Risks

It should be underscored that the overall optimistic attitude to the future does not decrease the tendency to voice the problems of the present. In the list of urgent problems, the youth of Armenia particularly stress socio-economic and political problems as urgent, placing less importance on the problems of healthcare, environment, and quality of life. In particular, the youth consider unemployment to be *very urgent* (85.8 per cent), the Karabakh conflict (85.1 per cent), rising poverty (78.9 per cent), emigration (77.9 per cent), corruption (77.0 per cent), the risk of war (65.8 per cent), environmental pollution (51.8 per cent), presence of life-threatening diseases (51.1 per cent), and the inadequate level of law enforcement (49.3 per cent). In contrast, climate change was considered very urgent for 19.9 per cent of the respondents, but not urgent at all for 11.0 per cent (**Figure 5.5**).

Figure 5.5: In your opinion, how urgent are the following problems for Armenian society?





The relatively less urgent problems—such as the risk of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the presence of life-threatening diseases, the inadequate level of protection in the workplace, as well as climate change and natural disasters—are mainly underlined as urgent by those living in rural areas, and are less important for those in urban areas ( $X^2=25.506$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer’s  $V=.150$ ;  $X^2=18.452$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer’s  $V=.125$ ;  $X^2=14.101$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer’s  $V=.110$ ;  $X^2=26.023$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer’s  $V=.148$ ; respectively) (Figure 5.6). Furthermore, the presence of life-threatening diseases, climate change, and natural disasters are underlined as urgent more by female respondents and considered less urgent by male respondents ( $X^2=27.450$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer’s  $V=.153$ ;  $X^2=7.867=^2$ ,  $p<.05$ , Cramer’s  $V=.081$ , respectively).

**Figure 5.6: In your opinion, how urgent are the following problems for Armenian society?**

	Very urgent	Somewhat urgent	A little urgent	Not urgent at all
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>				
City	26.8%	38.2%	28.8%	6.1%
Village	40.1%	35.8%	20.5%	3.5%
	31.8%	37.3%	25.7%	5.1%
<b>Life-threatening diseases</b>				
City	46.3%	33.5%	16.6%	3.7%
Village	59.0%	26.3%	12.7%	2.0%
	51.0%	30.8%	15.1%	3.1%
<b>Level of protection in the workplace</b>				
City	21.1%	37.7%	26.6%	14.6%
Village	27.4%	37.5%	27.1%	8.0%
	23.4%	37.6%	26.8%	12.1%
<b>Climate change and natural disasters</b>				
City	15.8%	35.0%	37.3%	11.8%
Village	26.7%	36.2%	27.4%	9.7%
	19.9%	35.5%	33.6%	11.0%

A statistically significant correlation has been identified between the highlighting of current problems and the youth’s age, amount spent on personal

needs, educational level, and employment status (Figure 5.7). Parallel to the increase in age, unemployment, rising poverty, emigration, corruption, and the inadequate level of law enforcement are emphasised more as urgent social issues, whereas the lower age group perceives environmental pollution as an urgent problem. The more they spend on their personal needs, the more they consider emigration, corruption, and inadequate level of law enforcement as urgent problems; in contrast, the less they spend on personal needs, the more they consider street crime and the inadequate level of protection in the workplace to be urgent social problems. The higher their level of education, the more the youth perceive unemployment, rising poverty, emigration, corruption, and the inadequate level of law enforcement as urgent social problems; in contrast, the lower the level of education, the more they perceive environmental pollution and street crime as urgent social problems. The youth who are employed are more inclined to underline rising poverty, emigration, corruption, the inadequate level of law enforcement as urgent social problems; in contrast, unemployed youth are more inclined to emphasise the urgency of street crime and inadequate level of protection in the workplace.

Figure 5.7

Spearman's rho=	Age	Personal expenses	Educational level	Employment
Unemployment	-.171**		-.139**	
Rising poverty	-.219**		-.178**	.103**
Emigration	-.120**	-.100**	-.117**	.136**
Corruption	-.119**	-.093**	-.100**	.100**
Environmental pollution	.063*		.069*	
Inadequate level of law enforcement	-.128**	-.132**	-.120**	.105**
Street crime		.076**	.075**	-.078**
Inadequate level of protection in the workplace		.093**		-.095**

In addition to the quantitative data presented above, the data from the qualitative FGD study shows that the youth perceive the main societal risks to be

the unstable, unfavourable legislative framework, the low level of law enforcement, the unfavourable conditions for the development of small and medium businesses in the context of a monopolised economy, social injustice, the supervision of the lifestyle of the youth by the social environment (particularly in village communities and in regional towns), as well as uncertainty about the future. As a rule, the instability of the legislative framework is one of the main fears voiced.

«For example, changes in the law bother us, irritate us a lot because you get used to one thing and then suddenly they change it; once again, we adapt»

(25-year-old female, regional town).

«Not only the administration and management, but the laws are also demanding»

(24-year-old female, village community).

«When the state [the government] changes, they will say, «right we are bringing in new laws, and removing all the old ones»»

(28-year-old male, village community).

The manifestation of distrust in the legislation is particularly expressed during discussions on the pension reform.

«For example, a person might not live 63 years and that money will be lost»

(18-year-old female, Yerevan).

«It [pension reform] seems to be another blow by the government. If a person is receiving the minimal wage—around 80.000 drams or 60.000 drams—it is not logical that they should be in favour of the accumulative pension system, for the state to provide for their old age later on. Moreover, a person may not reach that age, working that hard»

(23-year-old female, regional town).

«For example, you put something or a sum for long-term deposit of 15–20 years. Are you sure that that bank will continue operating to the end? It's the same with this pension scheme. It won't work. Secondly, how do you know [laughs] what's going to happen next?»

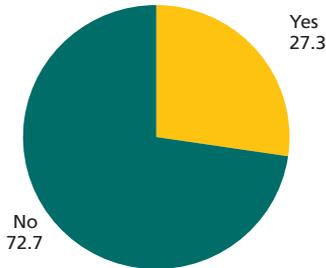
(22-year-old male, Yerevan).

The latter quote also expresses distrust of the banking system. In other words, distrust is expressed in both the state and banks with regard to accumulative pensions and the accumulation of financial capital in general.

## Migration and Experience of Discrimination

27.3 per cent of the respondents want to abandon their native residence and move to another town or village in Armenia (**Figure 5.8**), while 30.6 per cent of them are planning to leave Armenia (**Figure 5.9**).

**Figure 5.8: Would you want to move to another city/village in Armenia?**



**Figure 5.9: Are you planning to emigrate from Armenia?**

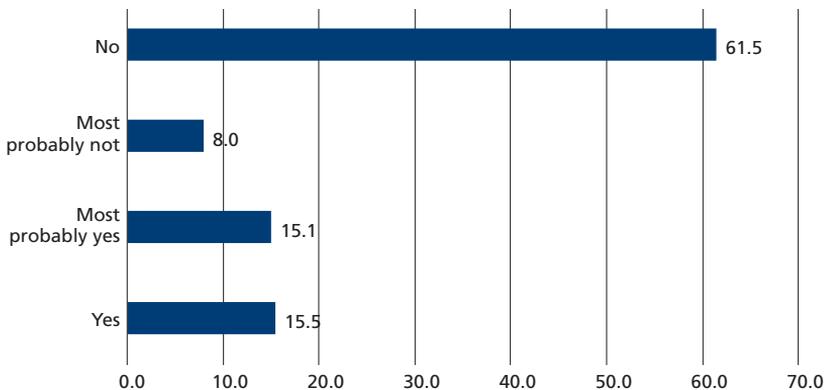
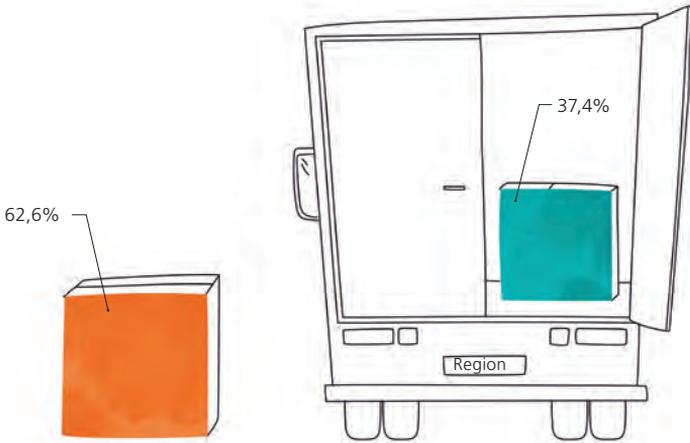
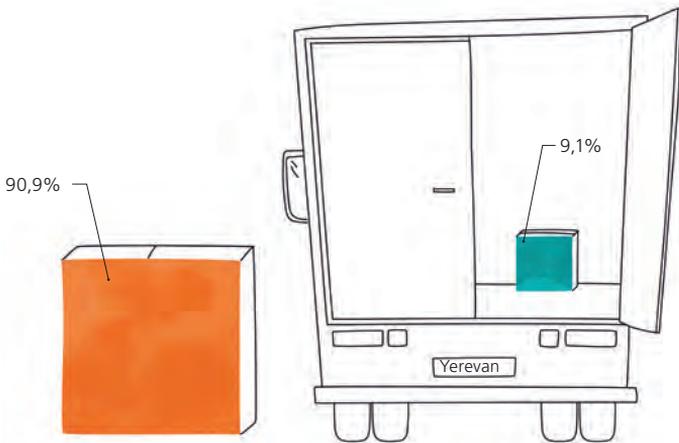


Figure 5.10: Would you like to relocate / move to another city / village in Armenia?

Inhabitants of regions



Inhabitants of Yerevan



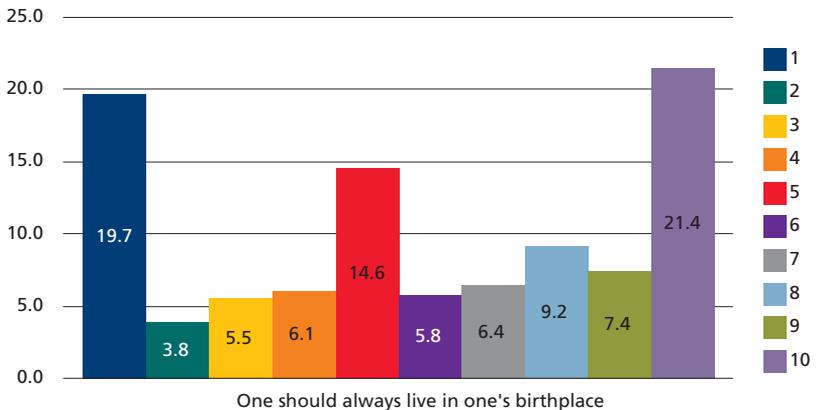
● Yes ● No

Those who wish to change their residence within Armenia are mostly youth living in the regions. Those wanting to move from Yerevan to the regions (N=424) constitute just 9.9 per cent, while those wanting to move from the regions to Yerevan (N=776) constitute 37.4 per cent (**Figure 5.10**). Consequently, when presenting the reasons for internal migration, that migration must be viewed primarily as relocation from towns and villages in the regions to the capital city (Manukyan et al. 2012: 39).

It should be stressed that more female than male respondents want to relocate to other towns/villages in Armenia ( $X^2=17,508$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.122$ ).

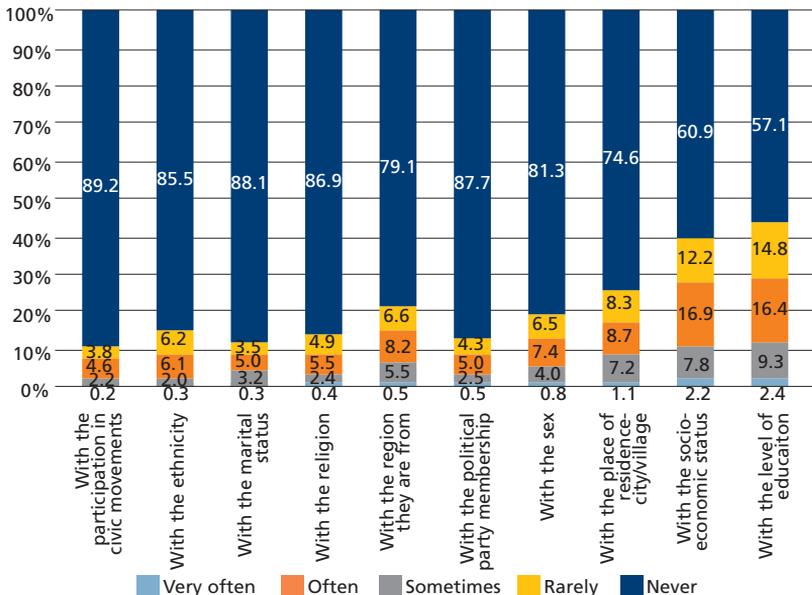
The ratings given to the statement, «One should always live in one's birthplace», show that in general extreme and averaged attitudes are equally distributed: 21.4 per cent completely agree, 19.7 per cent completely disagree (**Figure 5.11**). Moreover, a statistically significant correlation has been identified between this variable and the respondents' gender and residence ( $X^2=25.326$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.146$ ;  $X^2=36.955$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.176$ ). It is possible to assert that the place attachment is particularly weaker in women in urban areas and stronger in men in rural areas.

**Figure 5.11: Please assess the extent to which you agree with the following statements. (1 expresses total disagreement and 10 expresses total agreement)**



Among the factors determining the intention to move from village to town, it is possible to identify the discriminatory attitude that villagers feel they are being subjected to because of their residence. Despite that, according to the study findings, only a small portion of the young people surveyed have ever felt discrimination based on different factors: level of education, 42.9 per cent (n=510), socio-economic status, 39.1 per cent (n=464), type of residence, 25.4 per cent (n=248), belonging to a region, 20.9 per cent (n=156), gender 18.7 per cent (n=223), party affiliation, 12.3 per cent (n=145), marital status, 11.9 per cent (n=141), and being a member of any civil movement, 10.8 per cent (n=127) (Figure 5.12). Nevertheless, a statistically significant correlation has been identified with the fact that respondents in rural areas have felt discriminated against because of their socio-economic status, gender, regional belonging/origin and place of residence more frequently than those in urban areas ( $X^2=14,750$ ,  $p=.005$ , Cramer's  $V=.111$ ;  $X^2=20,625$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.132$ ;  $X^2=17,125$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.120$ ;  $X^2=22,708$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.138$ ;  $X^2=33,163$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.167$ , respectively).

**Figure 5.12: Have you ever felt discriminated against because of one of the following grounds? How often?**



During FGDs held in village communities, the topic of clothes was frequently touched upon as an important factor in how the youth present themselves and the impression they leave, as well as the supervision of their lifestyle by parents and other members of the family. Apparently—according to the youth participating in the FGDs—in Armenian society, clothes are a means to present one’s social status. During the discussions, examples were given—in an urban-rural context—of clothes being perceived as a reason for mockery or discrimination based on socio-economic status.

*«For example, when a villager goes to stay with their relatives in the city and tries to fit in, and tries to think like them and dress like them, so that they can communicate with each other and strengthen their bonds»*

(20-year-old female, village community).

Male respondents who live in villages and regional towns consider cars, in particular, to be an economic status indicator; and young people who cannot afford to drive a good brand of car consider themselves to be in a lower position in society. The following quote reveals this:

*«It is unpleasant that we are ostentatious; I mean, I want my jeep to be better than your jeep, and so on...»*

(21-year-old male, regional town).

If we take into account that 14.5 per cent have felt discriminated against on ethnic grounds—non-Armenian youth taking part in the survey constituted just 2.3 per cent of participants—perhaps it is possible to assume that the respondents have encountered discrimination primarily when outside Armenia.

The youth identify three main reasons for internal and external migration: first, the desire to improve the quality of life (internal migration 32.9 per cent, external migration 35.6 per cent); second, better opportunities for employment (internal migration 28.9 per cent; external migration 30.8 per cent); third, the desire to receive a better education (internal migration 16.1 per cent, external migration 12.6 per cent) (**Figure 5.13**).

Figure 5.13

	What is the MAIN REASON for relocating/ resettling?	What is the MAIN REASON for intending to move to another country?
Desire to improve the quality of life	32.9	35.6
Better opportunities for employment	28.9	30.8
Desire to receive a better education	16.1	12.6
Better opportunities to start own business	6.5	4.2
Desire to be closer to the people who are important to me	3.7	1.4
Not to be dependent on other people's opinions	2.2	1.1
To realise my ideas and for self-realisation	3.7	1.4
To avoid the current conflicts in my present town/village	1.9	-
The desire to feel more free	-	0.3
The desire to live a more dignified life	-	6.4
The desire for greater cultural diversity	-	2.5
The desire to live in a safer/more secure state	-	2.2
Other	4.0	1.4
Total	100	100

Depending on the age of the youth surveyed, the main reasons for both external and internal migration change (Figure 5.14). In particular, for 38.1 per cent of the age group 14–17, the main reason for internal migration is to receive a better education. For 21.9 per cent, it is the desire to improve the quality of life, and for 15.2 per cent, it is to have more opportunities for employment. The main reason for leaving Armenia for 30.7 per cent is to improve the quality of life; for 24.8 per cent, it is to have better opportunities for employment; and for 22.8 per cent, it is to receive a better education. Among the main reasons for migration, those over 18 emphasised improving the quality of life and better opportunities for employment. Unlike the younger respondents, among the

age group 18–21 it is external rather than internal migration that is perceived as the opportunity to receive better education.

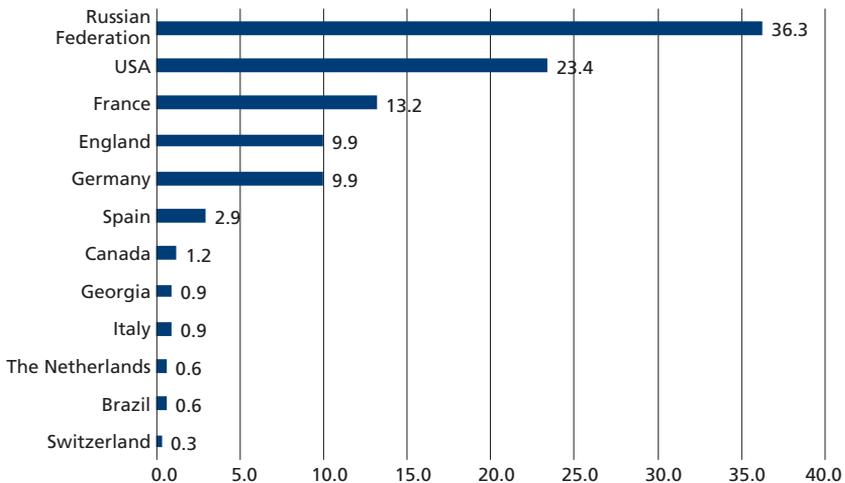
Figure 5.14

	14–17 years old		18–21 years old		22–25 years old		26–29 years old	
	Migration internal/ external							
Desire to improve the quality of life	21.9%	30.7%	28.8%	30.5%	46.9%	35.1%	38.1%	48.1%
Better opportunities for employment	15.2%	24.8%	34.2%	24.4%	34.6%	38.1%	38.1%	36.3%
Desire to receive better education	38.1%	22.8%	11.0%	20.7%	3.7%	4.1%	1.6%	1.3%
Better opportunities to start own business	8.6%	7.7%	5.5%	5.0%	7.4%	2.1%	3.2%	1.3%
Desire to be closer to the people who are important to me	2.9%	1.0%	4.1%	2.4%	3.7%	2.0%	4.8%	
Not to be dependent on other people's opinions	2.9%	2.0%	4.1%	2.4%	1.2%			
To realise my ideas and for self-realisation	5.7%	2.0%	6.8%	3.7%			1.6%	
To avoid the current conflicts in my present town/village	1.9%		2.7%		2.5%			
The desire to feel more free		1.0%						
The desire to live a more dignified life		3.0%		4.9%		11.3%		6.5%
The desire for greater cultural diversity		4.0%		1.2%		3.1%		1.3%
The desire to live in a safer/more secure state				2.4%		2.1%		5.2%
Other	2.9%	1.0%	2.7%	2.4%		2.1%	12.7%	

There is a statistically significant correlation between the main reasons for leaving Armenia and the variables of the respondents' gender ( $X^2=26,934$ ,  $p=.005$ , Cramer's  $V=.275$ ) and studying in any educational institution

( $X^2=51,982$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.382$ ). Female respondents perceive emigration as the opportunity to receive a better education, while male respondents emphasise better employment opportunities created by emigrating. Those currently studying in any educational institution perceive emigration as an opportunity to receive a better education, while those not studying emphasise the possibilities emigration creates for better quality of life and employment opportunities. The target country for the largest segment of potential emigrants is Russia (36.3 per cent), followed by the US (23.4 per cent), France (13.2 per cent), and United Kingdom and Germany (9.9 per cent each) (Figure 5.15).

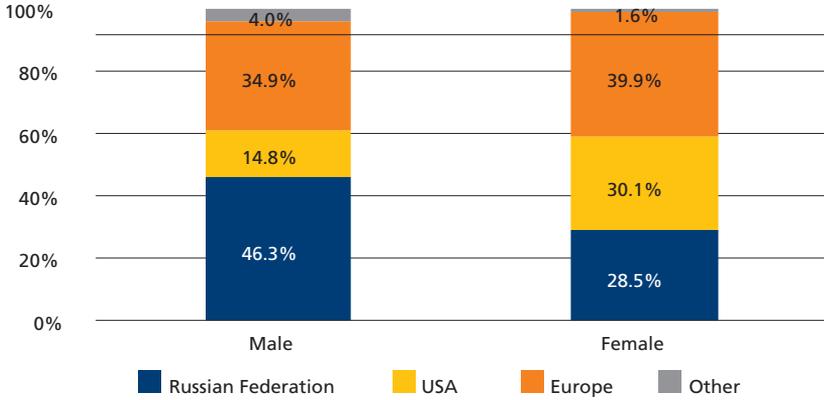
**Figure 5.15: Where would you prefer to move?**



In the countries mentioned above, the existence of relatively large and influential Armenian diaspora communities should be noted. The sizes of these communities almost reflect the proportions of the answers received from the respondents: the largest number of Armenians live in Russia, followed by the US and France (see International Labour Organization 2009: 6f, Panossian 2003: 140f).

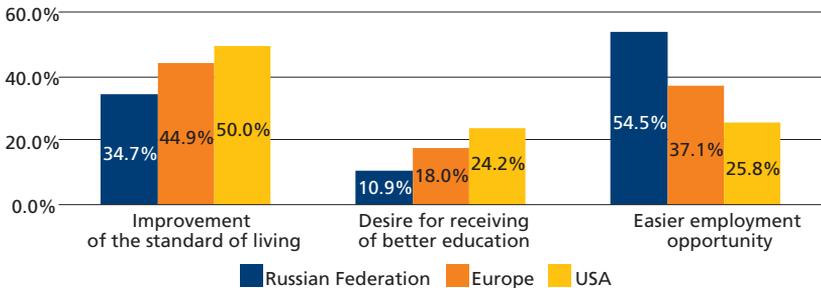
Destinations for emigration differ depending on gender ( $X^2=18,267$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.231$ ). In particular, male respondents prefer Russia, while females prefer the US (Figure 5.16).

Figure 5.16: Where would you prefer to move to?



If we try to correlate the main directions of migration and main reasons, then we can contend that, of those who note improvement in quality of life as their main reason, the first are those who want to go to the US (50.0 per cent), followed by those who want to go to Europe (44.9 per cent), and those who want to go to Russia (34.7 per cent). The same sequence applies for those leaving in order to receive a better education: US 24.2 per cent, Europe 18 per cent, and Russia 10.9 per cent. The picture changes regarding those leaving for better employment opportunities; Russia is in first place (54.5 per cent), followed by the US (25.8 per cent), and Europe (37.1 per cent) (Figure 5.17).

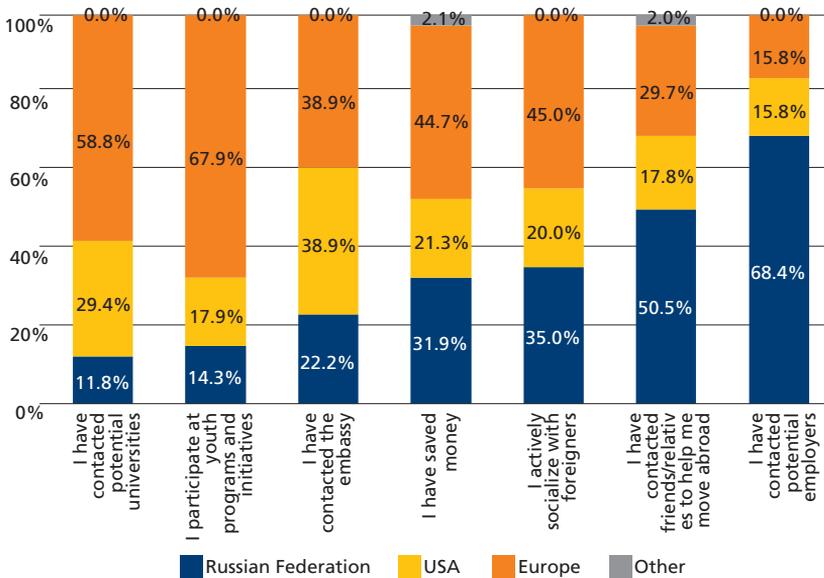
Figure 5.17: Where would you prefer to move? / What would be the MAIN REASON for moving out of Armenia?



49.9 per cent of those wanting to emigrate (N=359) have not yet initiated anything for leaving the country. 29.9 per cent of the potential young migrants have already contacted their family and friends abroad—in fact, 35.6 per cent of respondents in rural areas and 27.5 per cent in urban areas have done so. In other words, in order to organise their emigration, they are turning to Armenian transnational networks for assistance. These networks of family and friends play an important role in this process (Mkrtichyan et al. 2013: 20f).

13.8 per cent of those questioned are collecting money to organise their emigration, while 8.2 per cent participate in youth programmes and initiatives hoping to solve the issue of leaving Armenia. 5.9 per cent of those inclined to emigrate are in active contact with foreigners, 5.6 per cent have contacted possible employers, another 5.6 per cent are already in contact with the relevant embassies, and 5.0 per cent have contacted the relevant universities. It is important to note that the majority of those who have contacted possible employers and/or relatives and friends (68.4 and 50.5 per cent respectively) want to move to Russia (Figure 5.18).

**Figure 5.18: What are you doing in order to leave the country? / Where would you prefer to move?**



According to the FGD findings, not only are youth attracted by the prospects of education in other societies (e.g., Russia), but also of being free and independent in their social life.

All participants of the FGDs considered emigration a painful topic related to the reality in Armenia. According to the participants of the FGDs, the resolution of socio-economic problems is imperative. Emigration is also considered to represent a primary threat to Armenia.

Almost all of the participants found that the main reason for emigration is social insecurity, the lack of sufficient jobs, and working conditions.

*«There's no livelihood. You say, let me go, bring some money home, find work in Russia or another country, find work so that my family can survive. That's why there is emigration»*

(28-year-old male, regional town).

*«It is mostly the social condition that motivates the Armenians to go. But if there were good workplaces, a good government that would provide good jobs, I'm sure that they [emigrants] would definitely not leave their homes»*

(23-year-old female, village community).

Parallel to the main topic of emigration, attention was also paid to the topic of the family during the discussions.

*«Well it's bad that fathers, grandfathers leave their children, their families and go somewhere else to work. That is a heartache for the children, for the fathers; they, away from their families ...»*

(16 year-old female, village community).

Qualitative findings showed that the phenomenon of emigration also benefits the delineation of pessimistic scenarios relating to the future.

*«It's true, it's difficult to live here, support a family here, but if we think like that, everyone will leave and no one will be left in Armenia»*

(27-year-old female, regional town).

«A brain drain is taking place. People who are experts in their profession, naturally, are paid more elsewhere and they stay there. I don't blame them»

(28-year-old male, Yerevan).

As for the emigration destinations, particularly the FGD participants in villages and regional towns generally mentioned Russia, sometimes the US, as well as France and Germany as European countries (this confirms the findings of the quantitative part).

«It depends on what aim the youth have. If they are leaving for educational reasons, mostly Europe, but for employment, Russia. That is, it depends on what professional quality they have, what work they are looking for abroad. Desires and capabilities are not always taken into account. It's easier to go to Russia. There are people who want to go to America; the wages are higher there, but it's not possible for them»

(29-year-old female, regional town).

«On the whole, they go to Russia but they also want to go to other countries, America, France, and Germany. My acquaintances went to France as refugees. They were given jobs and a house and now they help their relatives here. Sometimes families and women also go, but it's especially the men who go»

(24-year-old male, village community).

In the context of pessimistic thoughts about the future of the country, the tense military relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan were also stressed.

«I guess we all want to live in a safe country; the fact of the war is painful»

(27-year-old female, regional town).

## Discussion

The findings of the survey highlight both the fears of the youth concerning the future and the monopolised economic environment, as well as distrust in the rule of law. In this context, fundamental societal issues—such as unemployment, increase in poverty, emigration, corruption, and the poor level of law enforcement—are being voiced.

Overall, the societal risks that the youth encounter while realising their plans depend on the specificities of the distribution of economic, social, and cultural capital within Armenian society. There is a great difference between the incomes of the richest and poorest in Armenia and this is expressed in the Gini coefficient (index), which has increased from 2008–2014 (Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia 2015). Such extreme inequality in economic capital gives rise to inequality in acquiring cultural capital and results in the polarisation of social statuses and social tension (see also Manukyan 2014)—including in the youth sector, because socio-economic status is fundamental in the lives of young people.

Youth who are dissatisfied with their family life possess less economic and social capital. Their attitudes concerning the future are more pessimistic. Cultural capital is also important. Those studying in any educational facility whatsoever picture the future more optimistically than those not studying.

Although the majority of the youth are optimistic about their future, pessimistic attitudes to the future increase as they grow older. Recent studies conducted underline the relevance of the problems revealed concerning employment for more mature youth (Serriere 2014).

Lack of confidence in the future as well as hopelessness about finding employment and improving their situation in their homeland are common reasons for emigration. The economic downturn, the ongoing war, internal political tension, instability, and the threat to existence have all given rise to frustration and disillusionment, contributing to emigration. Young people's target countries for emigration are Russia, the US, and Europe—France, in particular (Aleksanyan 2015: 221). The influence of the Armenian Diaspora and transnational migration networks is noteworthy in the matter of the high migration index (Atanesyan, Mkrtchyan & Tumanyan 2015).

The quantitative findings presented in this section clearly create a framework for the further study of gender issues in Armenia. Particularly interesting for any future in-depth studies are the findings that reveal that young people studying in any educational establishment are less satisfied with their intimate relationships than those who are not studying; that single women are the least satisfied with their intimate relationships; and that place attachment is weaker in female participants in urban areas and stronger in male participants in rural areas.



# IDENTITY, VALUES, AND RELIGION

## Introduction

The value-norm system of youth, which functions in the religious context, creates the social opportunities with which youth participate in social life (elections, civil initiatives, public movements) and also ensures the abilities of communicating and cooperating with other people (within society in general, and with separate social groups and individuals, in particular). Analysts have already shown that religiousness in young people correlates with concrete, socially acceptable and pro-social moral behaviour, attitudes, values and identities (Donahue & Benson 1995). Empirical studies show that religiously active youth report higher levels of social capital resources (Furrow, King & White 2004). The academic and social abilities of youth are linked to religious participation and corresponding value attitudes (Regnerus 2000; Youniss et al. 1999). Religious youth handle stressful situations better than those who are not religious (Donelson 1999). A recent study also shows that effective religious socialisation in offspring of relatively more traditional families is more effective than in those from non-traditional families (Petts 2014).

A 2012 study conducted in Armenia shows that youth who consider themselves Armenian, also consider belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church to be crucial; thus Christianity becomes a vital component of their national identity (Manukyan et al. 2012: 144).

In general, people's social activities consist of the production, dissemination, and consumption of certain values. The role of religion in the processes of transferring social values to the youth and the protection and development of

culture is particularly great. In the post-Soviet period, the political pressures limiting the activities of religious establishments have been eliminated and the number of churches has increased sharply. Religious festivals are celebrated at the state level and all of this contributes to shaping the worldview of Armenia's youth. Findings on their religious behaviour—coupled with elements of their value attitudes and world values—are presented in this section of the study. According to the recent Caucasus Barometer Survey (CRRC, 2015), the younger the age of the respondents (under 35), the greater the trust in religious institutions—which indirectly proves that the post-Soviet generation is more religious. The findings presented here are also to confirm this.

### Main Findings

- ▶ When describing themselves, youth in Armenia stress that they are Armenian (29.1 per cent) and Christian (24.4 per cent). Less important in their self-characterisation are world citizenship (1.2 per cent), «Europeanness» (1.0 per cent), «being a good human» (0.8 per cent), Tseghakron [Armenian Youth Movement] (0.6 per cent).
- ▶ Being Armenian is primarily considered in the context of ethnicity and not statehood; citizenship is considered less important as a cornerstone of identity.
- ▶ Unlike their counterparts in urban areas, youth in rural areas are more inclined to trust their neighbours, compatriots, and political leaders.
- ▶ Along with an increase in age, the value of «personal dignity» is increasingly stressed, and the values of «love/dedication towards others» and «patriotism» become less important.
- ▶ When doing voluntary work, male respondents are more involved in helping their peers with studying, implementing civic activities, and organising sports events in their local community, while female respondents are more involved with organising educational and cultural events and in NGO work.
- ▶ For one section of the youth, religion has a purely ritual significance. 77.3 per cent of the respondents pray regularly or frequently, 76 per cent celebrate religious festivals, 25.8 per cent take part in the liturgy, yet confessing to a priest or going on pilgrimages is not common.
- ▶ 50.3 per cent of the respondents trust the church a lot, while 31.2 per cent trust it to a certain extent. At the same time, 18.1 per cent of the youth

trust the Human Rights Defender a lot and 42.9 per cent to a certain extent.

- Trust in the church is lower in more mature youth (aged from 25 to 29) and those in urban areas.
- Young people's trust in certain social institutions and organisations changes depending on their residence, age, gender, and family's economic status. For example, confidence in the courts, police, Human Rights Defender, mass media, medical establishments, NGOs, and banks decreases in parallel with the increase in age.
- The vast majority of youth do not want homosexuals to be their neighbours and/or live in their community; 81 per cent of the respondents opposed this idea. Moreover, tolerance and/or indifference towards homosexuals is relatively higher amongst the female respondents.

## Analysis

### Social Affiliation and Trust

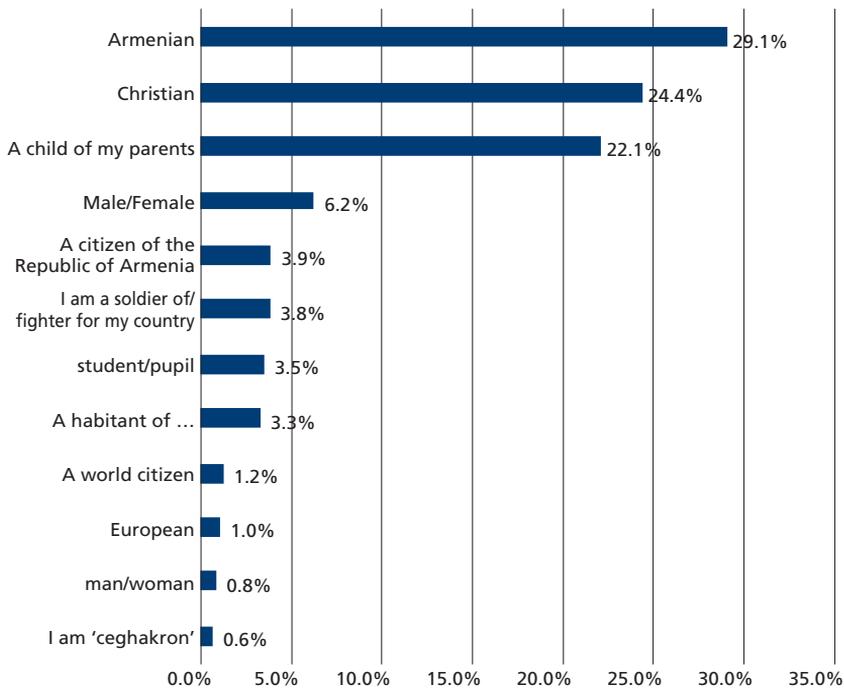
When characterising themselves, young people in Armenia emphasise that they are Armenian (29.1 per cent), Christian (24.4 per cent), and the children of their parents (22.1 per cent) (**Figure 6.1**). Other prominent indicators of self-identification are gender (6.2 per cent), Armenian nationality (3.9 per cent), educational status (3.5 per cent), and residence (3.3 per cent). 3.8 per cent of the respondents symbolically identified themselves as «soldiers of the country». World citizenship (1.2 per cent), Europeanness (0 per cent), being a good human (0.8 per cent), and «Tseghakron»<sup>6</sup> (0.6 per cent) are amongst the least important features of young people's self-identification.

The close link between religion and ethnicity has not lost its traditional meaning for today's young generation in Armenia. Moreover, ethnicity and nationality are differentiated in the perceptions of the youth. Being Armenian is perceived more in the context of ethnicity and not statehood; this partly determines citizenship being considered less important as a cornerstone of identity, which can of course lead the youth to civil apathy. It is understand-

.....  
 6 This term is used to describe the Armenian nationalist ideology that aims to unite the people of the territory of historical Armenia, within the framework of the state.

able why only 35.9 per cent of the respondents consider participation in civil initiatives to be fashionable. For the majority of the youth, the level of civil self-awareness and the culture of civic engagement are not yet high—for example, only 11.3 per cent identified themselves as a citizen—ethnic awareness and traditional culture are considered more important. Moreover, the respondents who indicated nationality and world citizenship as characteristics for self-identification—42.9 and 55.8 per cent respectively—were young women in urban areas.

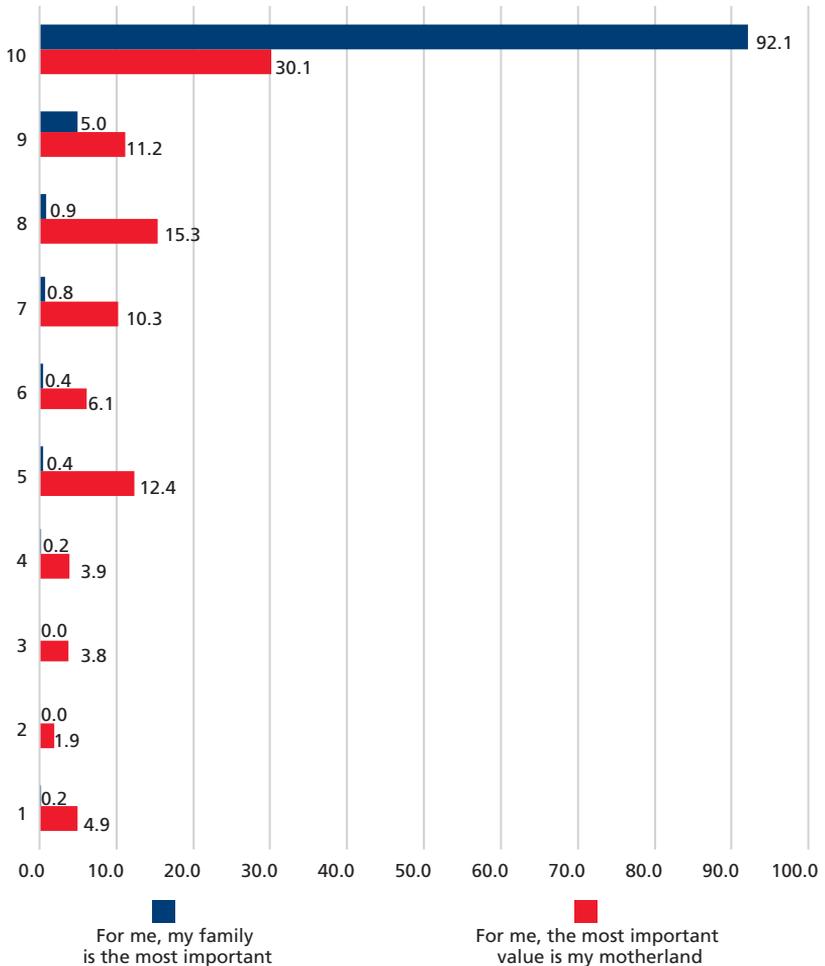
**Figure 6.1: I am ...**



The emphasis placed on the values of family and homeland<sup>7</sup> can also be seen from the respondents' other stances (Figure 6.2).

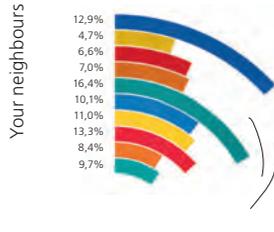
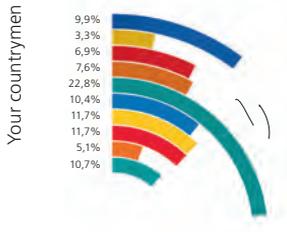
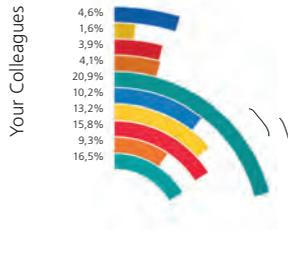
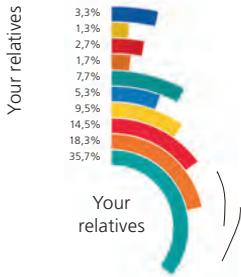
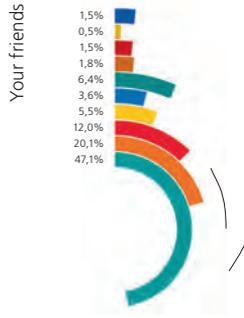
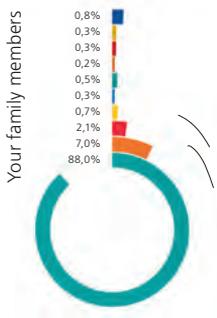
<sup>7</sup> FGDs show that the concept of «fatherland» in the mind of the youth has a subjective, personalised symbolism which is more a historic, abstract construct than a state and concrete one.

**Figure 6.2:** Please assess the extent to which you agree with the following statements. (1 expresses total disagreement and 10 expresses total agreement)



In the context of the stress placed on the important value of family, 98 per cent of the respondents—of which, 88 per cent, unreservedly—trust their family members, while 84.7 per cent of the respondents trust their friends, but only 47.1 per cent do so unreservedly. It is almost the same picture for relatives: 78 per cent are inclined to trust them, but only 35.7 per cent unreservedly (**Figure 6.3**).

Figure 6.3: How much do you trust...?

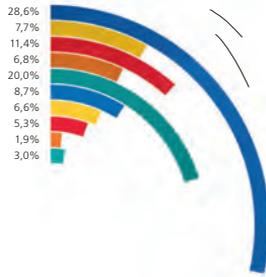


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

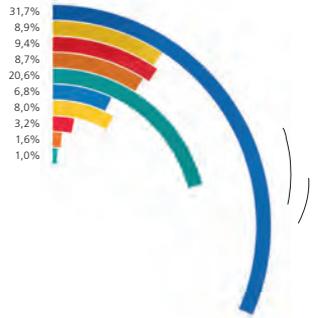
I don't trust them at all

I completely trust them

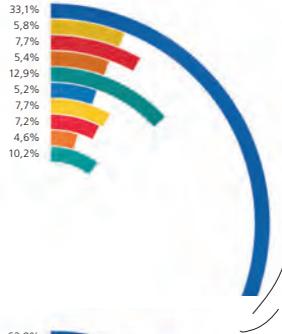
Representatives of other nations



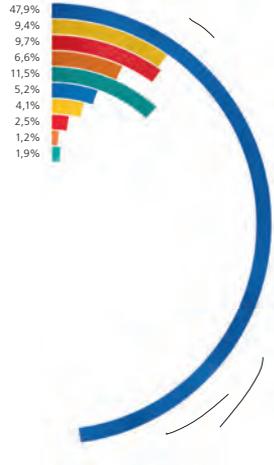
People with different political views



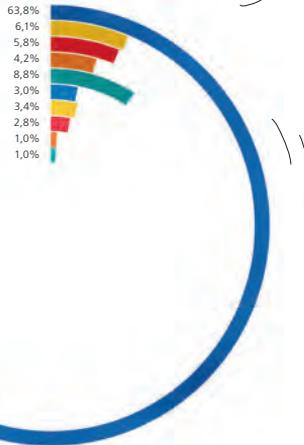
Religious leaders



Political leaders



Representatives of other beliefs/religions



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 I don't trust them at all I completely trust them

In the case of social groups beyond the family, a lack of trust is noticeable in the young respondents. The level of mistrust is high in interpersonal relationships, particularly where it concerns people of other nationalities; only 25.5 per cent of the youth are inclined to trust them. 54.8 per cent trust their classmates/colleagues, 39.2 per cent their compatriots, and 32.5 per cent their neighbours.

Overall, this is a worrying picture because the lack of mutual trust—as the precondition and result of social capital—will complicate social relationships and the productive regulation of interpersonal communication. In this sense, the attitude towards friends is a particularly important indicator, which is a typical phenomenon for post-Soviet countries. Youth choose their friends freely; they do not inherit them. If friends don't justify expectations, they no longer call them friends. However, it appears that some of the youth continue being friends with people that they either don't trust or trust very little. Such friendships transform into something else. It is fashionable to have many friends but for 19.6 per cent of the respondents, being faithful is not fashionable, for 28.9 per cent it is not that fashionable. Helping people—independent of personal profit—is not fashionable for 24.7 per cent, and not that fashionable for 29.8 per cent.

Turning to the FGDs on friendship, it is important to note that for the youth, friendship presents itself as a considerably broad concept in the sense of values, the qualitative description of which also shows their lifestyle. «Friendship» means commitment to the friendship, having the kind of friend that you trust, sharing in your friend's pain, being by your friend's side not only in happy times but also in sad times, being able to be happy with your friend, not being jealous of him; but, if you can't change your family, it is possible to change a backstabber and replace him for a more loyal person.

*«Tell me who your friend is and I will tell you who you are»*

(16-year-old male, village community).

*«What use is a man without a friend?»*

(25-year-old female, regional town).

*«It's not possible to live without friendship»*

(20-year-old female, Yerevan).

These quotes are characteristic of the existing value attitudes concerning friendship. In response to the question of whether friends should always be the same, represent the same social class or same social qualities—for example, miserly, humorous, touchy, and so on—the respondents do not respond definitively. They say that diverse friendly relations exist between people, so just as it is possible for the rich and the poor to be good friends with each other, it is just as possible that they will not even try. This testifies to the fact that friendship is not perceived absolutely by the youth, because it has diverse manifestations and social forms in society. The youth participating in the FGDs point out that there are not many real friends, and that it is not possible to have friendships presuming the same level of relationships of quality and intimacy, with many people. They point out that friendship has a corresponding cultural context in Armenia.

*«Our friendship differs greatly from the friendship of youth abroad. I have friends abroad and do not communicate with them as I do with my friends [of both genders here], and one girl from abroad said just that. «It's so interesting, when you go, let's say, to eat, you all go together. Even if you are going somewhere, you still call each other and go together. But we prefer to go alone or just two of us»»*

(21-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«By the way, the Spanish are very similar to the Armenians in their warm-bloodedness and their mentality. The Italians are the same. They are similar to us in the sense of friendship; while the Scots and English ... Even shaking hands is so cold, yes so cold, and that's why they drink tea all day [laughter]»*

(23-year-old female, Yerevan).

It can be seen from the quotes that the youth put friendship in a cultural context. They find that it has national characteristics. The respondents emphasise close and unique relationships with friends, which is only feasible within the Armenian context.

*«As Paruyr Sevak [poet] says, «let us be friends with the same emotions, persuasions, tastes and flag; not friends of merely the glass ...»»*

(25-year-old female, regional town).

In the Yerevan groups in particular, mistrust towards friends is registered and they speak of the decrease in numbers of friends over the years. In other words, the developing city environment has a negative impact on friendship.

*«Today in Yerevan, in good times, it's always easy to find friends, but when you are in a difficult situation, those same friends are not by your side; you don't understand why they left. In many cases you consider all of them your friends, but few of them become your friend»*

(24-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«There have been people around me whom I considered friends but after getting to know them, in the end it turned out that they were fair-weather friends»*

(20-year-old male, Yerevan).

In general, the two fundamental features that transmit negative qualities to friendship and were pointed out by the youth—not only in Yerevan but also in village and regional communities—were jealousy (in the case of females) and money (in the case of males).

*«There is friendship that is based on money; if your friend has money, then he is your friend. If he does not, you just ignore him. That's why there shouldn't be that kind of friendship»*

(20-year-old male, village community).

*«Girls are jealous, that's why»*

(15-year-old female, village community).

*«If a woman can envy a woman, a man cannot envy a woman»*

(24-year-old female, Yerevan).

Particular grounds for disagreements during the FGDs were the possible and impossible friendly relationship between boys and girls, men and women. At each discussion, the topic turned into a debate; some thought that it was possible, while others insisted that it was not.

*«A boy can be a much better friend than a girl»*

(15-year-old female, village community).

«Friendship between a boy and girl is possible until one falls in love with the other»

(16-year-old female, village community).

«In Armenia it is difficult for boys and girls to have a platonic friendship»

(23-year-old male, regional town).

«No, I think that it is possible, and it can last a long time and it is possible that neither one falls in love. No, neither of them can be in love and not love each other and it is possible to be friends for a long time. The fact that they do not see each other for a long time and so on cannot be a problem and they can continue to be friends. A boy and a girl can be friends, if they keep their distance»

(23-year-old female, Yerevan).

«Let's assume a boy and girl are just friends and the boy marries, then his wife will not consider it normal that he has such a close female friend. When you have a husband or wife, that is not normal»

(25-year-old female, Yerevan).

«For example, it is possible in Yerevan, but not in the regions»

(19-year-old female, regional town).

The opinions expressed on this topic are contradictory and diverse. Girl-boy relationships—especially in the village communities—are subject to community supervision in the sense that even if a friendly relationship is formed, the friends try to keep it away from the public eye. For example, teens communicate with each other online.

«It is very common in the village that a boy and a girl are friends and communicate online»

(18-year-old male, village community).

In general, trust in different social groups is correlated to the youth's gender, residence, age, and employment status. In particular, young people in rural areas are more inclined to trust their neighbours, compatriots and political lead-

ers than those in urban areas.<sup>8</sup> Males are more inclined to trust colleagues/classmates, friends, relatives, neighbours, members of the family, and compatriots, than females.<sup>9</sup>

Unemployed youth are more inclined to trust religious leaders, relatives, political leaders, and compatriots, than those in employment.<sup>10</sup> The younger respondents are more inclined to trust religious leaders, friends, relatives, political leaders and compatriots, than the more mature respondents.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, over 50 per cent of the respondents trust the church a lot, and 31.2 per cent somewhat. This is a good indicator because the crisis in trust in different institutions is acutely manifested in present-day Armenian society. Only the army is trusted more than the church (70.7 and 50.3 per cent respectively) (**Figure 6.4**). And, for example, only 18.1 per cent trust the Human Rights Defender a lot, while 42.9 per cent do so, somewhat.

In comparison, 18.6 per cent of the respondents trust the healthcare institutions a lot, and 50.5 per cent somewhat; 13.6 per cent trust the police a lot, and 39.3 per cent somewhat; 11.5 per cent trust the banks a lot, and 41.6 per cent somewhat; 8 per cent trust the courts a lot, and 36.5 per cent somewhat; 7

- .....
- 8** Trust in neighbours: village dwellers (Mdn=7), city dwellers (Mdn=5)- U=193.906, z= 4.911, p<.001. Trust in compatriots: village dwellers (Mdn=6), city dwellers (Mdn=5)- U=183.131, z=3.086, p=.002. Trust in political leaders: village dwellers (Mdn=2), city dwellers (Mdn=1)- U=183.421, z=3.841, p<.001.
  - 9** Trust in colleagues/classmates: male (Mean Rank=618.82), female (Mean Rank=536.02)- U=161.492, z= -3.561, p<.001. Trust in friends: male (Mdn=10), female (Mdn=9)- U=123.067, z=-8.976, p<.001. Trust in relatives: male (Mdn=9), female (Mdn=8)- U=146.836, z=-4.634, p<.001. Trust in neighbours: male (Mdn=7), female (Mdn=5)- U=136.203, z=-6.110, p<.001. Trust in family members: male (Mean Rank=623.09), female (Mean Rank=582.24)- U=161.492, z=-3.561, p<.001. Trust in compatriots: male (Mdn=6), female (Mdn=5)- U=156.017, z=-2.736, p=.006.
  - 10** Trust in religious leaders: employed (Mdn=3), unemployed (Mdn=5)- U=155.291, z=4.583, p<.001. Trust in relatives: employed (Mdn=8), unemployed (Mdn=9)- U=152.982, z=3.611, p<.001. Trust in political leaders: employed (Mdn=1), unemployed (Mdn=2)- (U=148.881, z=3.693, p<.001). Trust in compatriots: employed (Mdn=5), unemployed (Mdn=6)- U=151.216, z=3.457, p=.001.
  - 11** Trust in religious leaders: 14- to 22-year-olds (Mdn=5), 23- to 29-year-olds (Mdn=3)- (U=146.716, z=-4.816, p<.001). Trust in friends: 14- to 22-year-olds (Mdn=9.5), 23- to 29-year-olds (Mdn=9)- (U=159.887, z=-3.151, p=.002). Trust in friends: 14- to 22-year-olds (Mdn=9), 23- to 29-year-olds (Mdn=8)- (U=154.192, z=-4.174, p<.001). Trust in political leaders: 14- to 22-year-olds (Mdn=2), 23- to 29-year-olds (Mdn=1)- (U=142.097, z=-5.736, p<.001). Trust in compatriots: 14- to 22-year-olds (Mdn=6), 23- to 29-year-olds (Mdn=5)- (U=159.044, z=-3.006, p=.003).

per cent trust civil movements, and 31.4 per cent somewhat; 6.7 per cent trust NGOs a lot, and 42 per cent somewhat; 3.9 per cent trust local government bodies a lot and 27.7 per cent somewhat; 2.4 per cent trust the Armenian government a lot, and 22.5 per cent somewhat; and 1.8 per cent trust trade unions a lot, and 32.3 per cent somewhat.

Trust in the church is lower amongst mature youth ( $X^2=30.734$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.093$ ) and in those in urban areas ( $X^2=31.794$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.163$ ).

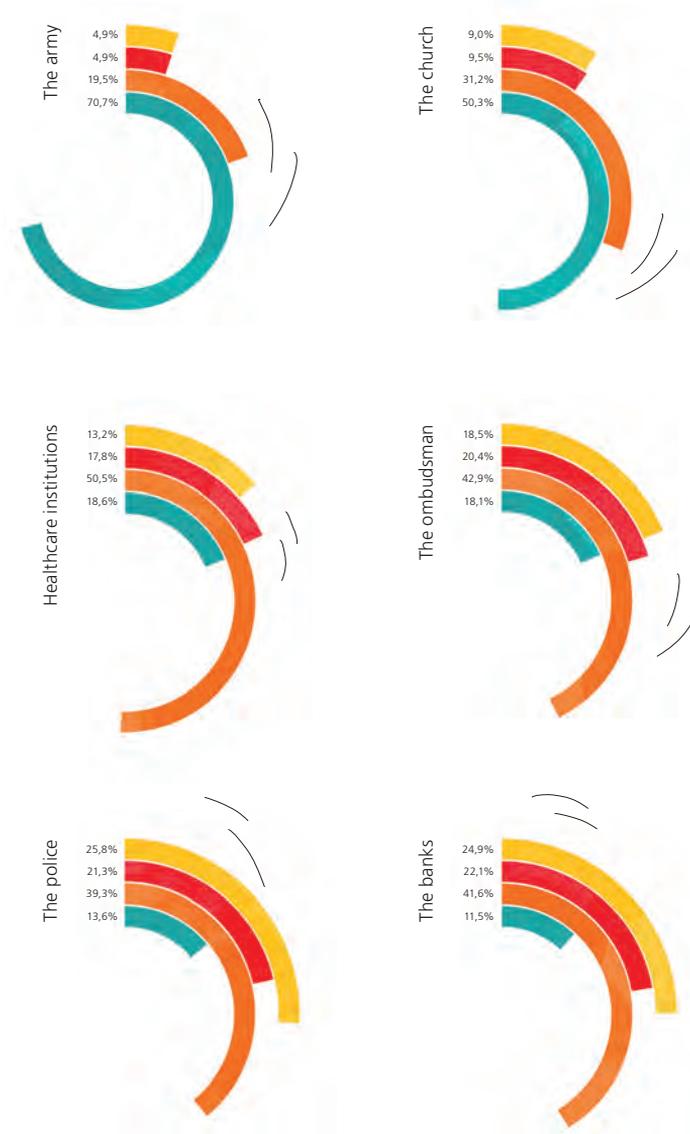
It is interesting that—according to the youth participating in the FGDs—contemporary youth give more place to religion in their lives, go to church more frequently, and pay more attention to the advice of the church than their parents do. Many explain this by mentioning the fact that their parents had lived in the Soviet Union, where atheism was publicly propagated and being a believer was not encouraged.

*«Whenever I've gone to church, during those rites, such as Easter eve ... or Christmas eve, when there is candle lighting and candles are taken [home], there are so many young people there. The attendance at churches has increased since the nineties. Atheist ideology was propagated in Soviet Armenia. I don't think the youth went to church that much then. They do so much more these days and I am very happy about that»*

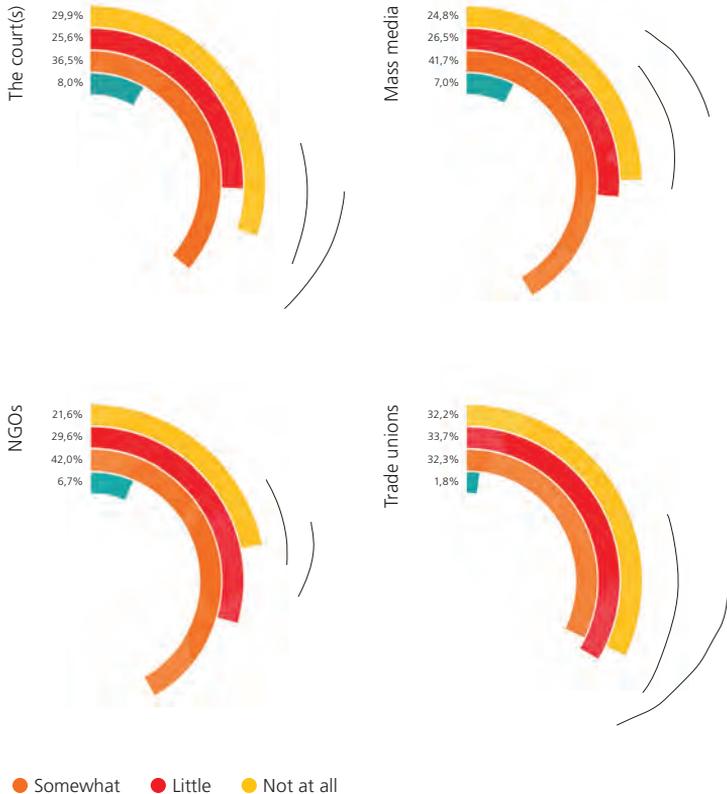
(27-year-old female, village community).

The degree of trust in certain social institutions and organisations also changes depending on the residence, gender, age, and economic status of the family. Respondents in rural areas trust the army, courts, police and health-care facilities more than those in urban areas ( $X^2=16.495$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.118$ ,  $X^2=21.398$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.135$ ,  $X^2=27.835$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.153$ ,  $X^2=16.334$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.117$ , respectively). Female respondents trust the police, mass media, NGOs, and army more than male respondents ( $X^2=29.199$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.157$ ,  $X^2=7.781$ ,  $p=.051$ , Cramer's  $V=.081$ ,  $X^2=12.982$ ,  $p=.005$ , Cramer's  $V=.106$ ,  $X^2=13.063$ ,  $p=.005$ , Cramer's  $V=.105$ , respectively). Young people's level of trust in courts, the police, Human Rights Defender, mass media, healthcare institutions, NGOs, and banks decreases as their age increases ( $X^2=49.093$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.118$ ,  $X^2=25.073$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.084$ ,  $X^2=38.524$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.105$ ,  $X^2=24.096$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.082$ ,  $X^2=50.523$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.119$ ,  $X^2=18.384$ ,  $p=.031$ , Cramer's  $V=.073$ ,  $X^2=26.430$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.086$ , respectively).

Figure 6.4: How much do you trust ...?



● A lot    ● Somewhat    ● Little    ● Not at all



### Perceptions of Value Norms

With respect to young people’s value system, among the most important values mentioned by the respondents were personal dignity (22.2 per cent), integrity (14.6 per cent), and loyalty (13.3 per cent), willpower and persistence to fight (11.5 per cent), love/respect for others (9.8 per cent), decency (6.3 per cent), and patriotism (5.8 per cent). The other values were rated below 5%. Specifically, modesty (4.3 per cent), financial well-being (2.9 per cent), tolerance (2.5 per cent), ability to cooperate (2.2 per cent), social reputation (1.8 per cent), craftiness (1.2 per cent), innovative spirit (0.9 per cent), and ability to strengthen one’s own position (0.5 per cent) (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Which three of these values are most important to you?



22,2%	Self-dignity	2,9%	Material welfare
14,6%	Honesty	2,5%	Tolerance
13,3%	Loyalty	2,2%	Skill to cooperate with others
11,5%	Willpower and determination	1,8%	Social reputation
9,8%	Love/respect for others	1,2%	Craftiness
6,3%	Decency	0,9%	Innovative spirit
5,8%	Patriotism	0,5%	Competency for strengthening your own position through ...
4,3%	Modesty		

Male respondents are inclined to stress personal dignity and patriotism as values, while female respondents stress decency and loyalty ( $X^2=27.393$ ,  $p=.017$ , Cramer's  $V=.151$ ). On the other hand, if personal dignity is underlined more as a value, in parallel with increasing age, then love/respect towards others and patriotism are rarely underlined ( $X^2=83.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.152$ ).

In fact, the meaning of traditional Armenian sayings has not gone out of fashion for the youth at all. 90.9 per cent of respondents agree with the saying, «*Lies have short legs*» [lies do not get far]. As we have already noted, honesty is an important value for our youth. 90.7 per cent of the respondents believe that, «*A polished stone will not stay on the ground*». In other words, independent of the current situation, one should develop one's own abilities and skills because, eventually, it will lead to the desired result. The same number of youth feel that, «*A good neighbour is better than a bad relative*». Here, we see the manifestation of traditional local solidarity. 90.2 per cent believe that, «*The tried tan [yogurt drink] is better than untried yogurt*». This pays tribute to traditional carefulness when making drastic decisions. 89.1 per cent of the respondents agree that, «*Water is for the young and words are for the old*». The respect shown to the elderly is obvious here. 86.5 per cent of the respondents also agreed with, «*If you have nails, scratch your own head*». This is the manifestation of the self-centeredness of Armenians. At the same time, 85.8 per cent of the youth agree with the saying, «*Do a good deed, throw it into the water*». Kindness, as a fundamental characteristic has always been highly valued by Armenians. 85.2 per cent of the respondents agree with the idea that, «*He who has a master is taken by his master, and he who doesn't have a master is taken by the wolf*». That is the conclusion shaped as a result of the history of the Armenians and the important role and strong influence played by patronage on the success of an individual in public life. 82.6 per cent of the youth agree that, «*There is nothing cheaper than the expensive*». Cheap, poor quality products have always been offered and ultimately, the apparent savings on these products result in greater expenses. 78.9 per cent of the respondents agree that, «*Sitting on a donkey is one tribulation, getting off is two*». This is associated with an insecurity complex, in which confessing one's own errors publicly is not accepted. The same complex is manifested when one cannot accept that one's circle of friends and family are of a higher calibre than oneself. 76.9 per cent of those questioned agree that, «*Dying with friends is a wedding*». This is a collectivist attitude that the youth have inherited from the older gen-

eration with their Soviet mentality. 63.8 per cent agree with the philosophy of life that is expressed in the principle of, «*Where there is bread, stay there*».

58.4 per cent find that, «*Yanking hair from a dog is something*». This means that one is inclined to profit by every means available. There is only one Armenian folk proverb that was not approved by the majority of the youth: «*I sit on the couch and wait for my luck*.» Only 17 per cent of the youth agree with this; the rest aim to manage their own lives and show initiative in solving their problems.

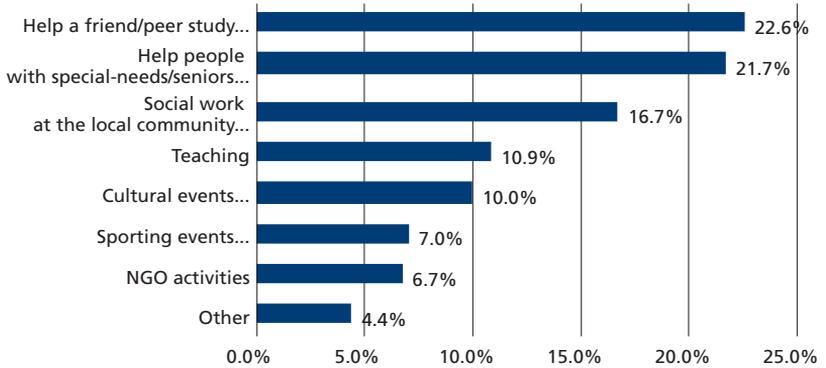
The above-mentioned proverbs allow us to reveal statistically significant associations that emphasise certain aspects of the respondents' value system. In particular, the female respondents are more inclined to agree that «*Lies have short legs*» ( $X^2=13.861$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.112$ ), emphasising the value of honesty; in contrast, male respondents are more inclined to agree that «*Dying with friends is a wedding*», emphasising the value of friendship and personal dignity ( $X^2=17.364$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.121$ ). Respondents in urban areas are more inclined to agree that, «*If you have nails, scratch your own head*», emphasising the importance of independence ( $X^2=13.861$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.112$ ); in contrast, respondents in rural areas are more inclined to agree that, «*A good neighbour is better than a bad relative*», emphasising the important of local community ties ( $X^2=17.364$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.121$ ).

For 85.8 per cent of the youth, the saying «*Do a good deed, throw it into the water*» is true, but only 16.9 per cent of the participants in the survey have voluntarily worked for free over the past twelve months. Moreover, young males who are either employed and/or studying in an educational establishment have done more voluntary work ( $X^2=13.558$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.106$ ,  $X^2=20.060$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.130$ ,  $X^2=7.145$ ,  $p=.008$ , Cramer's  $V=.077$ ).

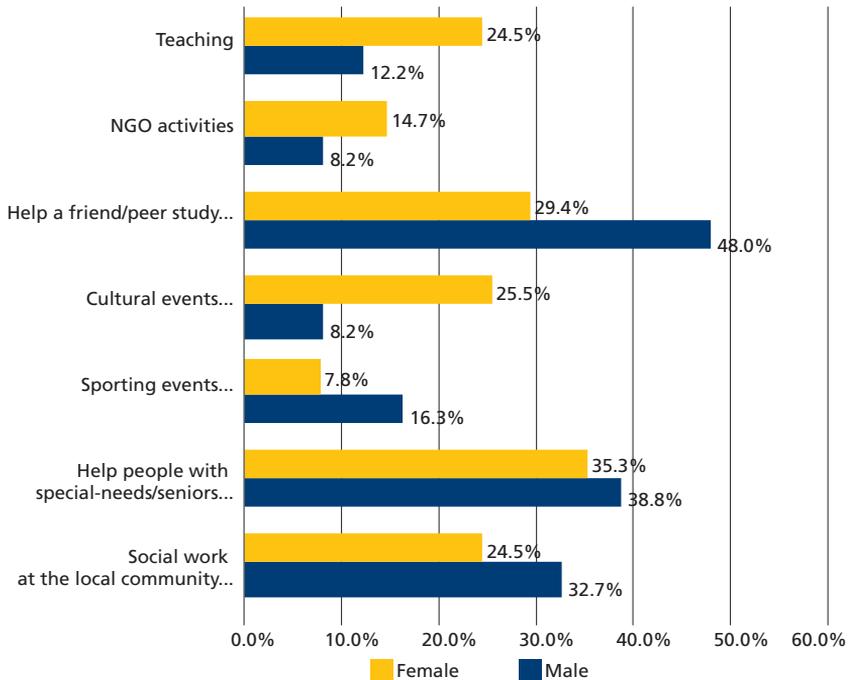
In the twelve months prior to the interview, 22.6 per cent of the voluntary work done by the youth was to help their peers with studying, helping those in need (21.7 per cent), doing social work in their local community (16.7 per cent), teaching (10.9 per cent), organising cultural events (10 per cent), organising sports events (7 per cent), and NGO activities (6.7 per cent) ( $N=202$ ) (**Figure 6.6**).

A statistically significant correlation has been revealed between the nature of voluntary work and the gender of the youth ( $X^2=30.399$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and their age ( $X^2=59.057$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

**Figure 6.6: Which of the following activities have you worked on voluntarily / volunteered on in the last 12 months?**



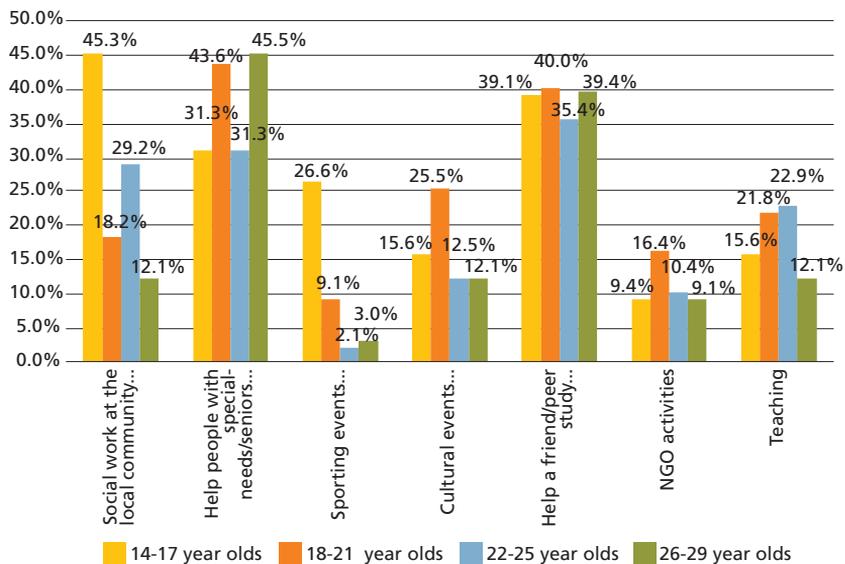
**Figure 6.7: Which of the following activities have you worked on voluntarily / volunteered on in the last 12 months?**



As **Figure 6.7** shows, male respondents have been more involved in helping their peers in studying, doing social work in their local community, and organising sports events, while female respondents have been more involved in teaching, organising cultural activities, and NGO activities.

On the whole, school-age youth are primarily involved in organising local community work and sports activities, while 18- to 21-year-olds (basically, student-age) are involved in organising cultural events. Teaching on a voluntary basis is mainly done by 18- to 25-year-olds (**Figure 6.8**).

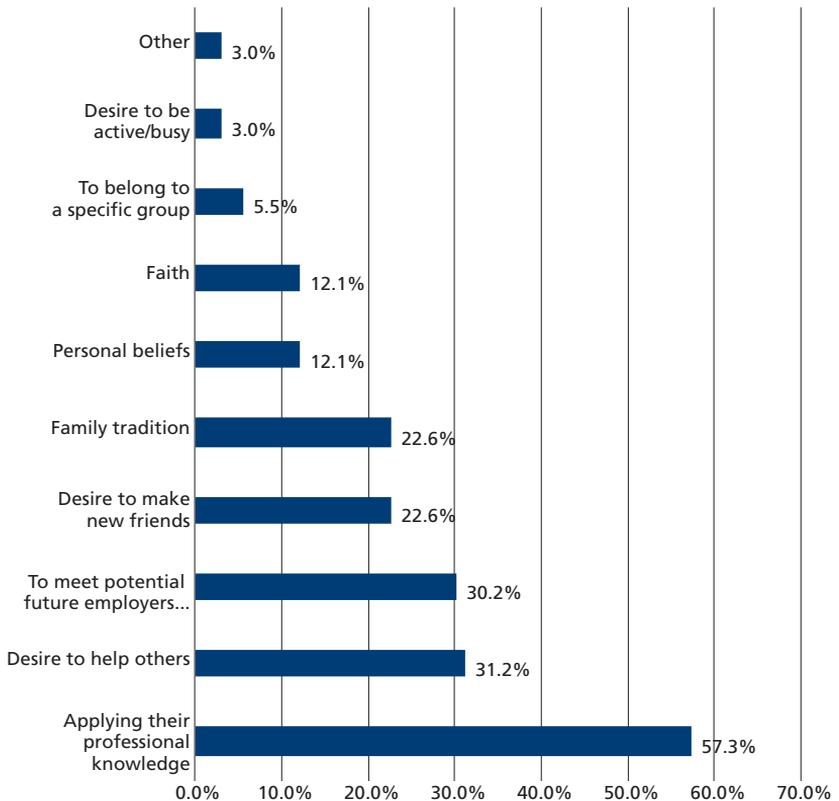
**Figure 6.8: Which of the following activities have you worked on voluntarily / volunteered in the last 12 months?**



It is also interesting that only 57.8 per cent of those involved in voluntary work have noted that the main reason for doing so is the desire to help others (**Figure 6.9**). Many of them note that they want to be busy (32.2 per cent). Other reasons include wanting to apply their professional knowledge (30.2 per cent), wanting to make new friends (22.6 per cent), meeting possible employers (22.6 per cent), doing voluntary work out of conviction (22.1 per cent), carrying on a family tradition (12.1 per cent), and arising from faith (5.5 per cent).

Overall, it is obvious that the reasons for doing voluntary work are of a more rational nature and rarely is it for conventional reasons. Moreover, doing voluntary work negatively correlates to young people’s religious beliefs: *God exists. God created the world. Heaven and hell exist. God is the source of morality.*<sup>12</sup> These beliefs are more acceptable to young people not involved in voluntary work

**Figure 6.9: What is your main reason for volunteering?**



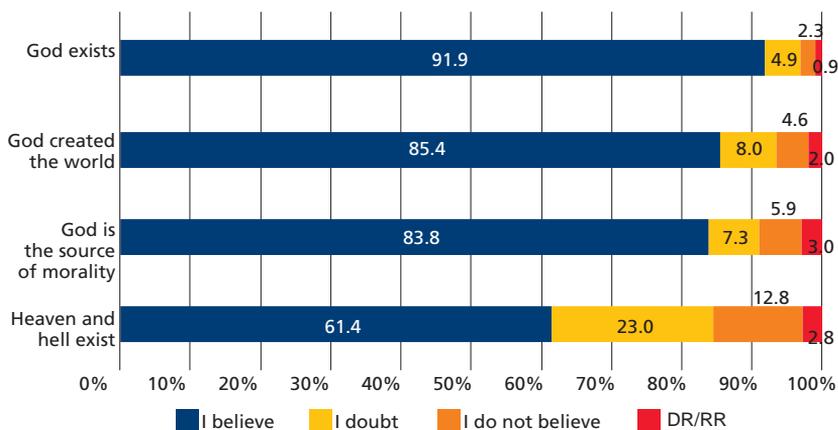
The youth consider themselves to be followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church (94.7 per cent), Catholic (1.8 per cent), and atheist (1 per cent). Over-

<sup>12</sup> A new nine-point metric scale was created for the correlation of these four variables, where 1 underlines the firmest belief in the proposed statements and 9 the weakest.

all, 91.9 per cent believe in the existence of God, 85.4 per cent believe that God created the world, 83.9 per cent that God is the source of morality, and 64.1 per cent that heaven and hell exist (**Figure 6.10**).

For one group of the youth, religion has a purely ritual significance. 77.3 per cent of the respondents pray regularly or frequently, 76 per cent celebrate religious festivals, 25.8 per cent take part in the liturgy. Nevertheless, confessing to a priest or going on pilgrimages is not common amongst the youth (**Figure 6.11**) and many of the youth have never done either the former and/or the latter (80.0 and 69.6 per cent respectively), while 33.1 per cent do not trust religious leaders at all. It is interesting that 72.9 per cent of the young people do not watch religious programmes.

**Figure 6.10: Do you believe that...?**



For a significant majority of the young people who have participated in the FGDs, being a Christian is identified with holding Christian beliefs. For the FGD participants, being a Christian means believing in God. At the same time, the religious identity of the participants is not associated with the church, as expressed by one of the participants in the following:

*«It's not obligatory to go to church and light a candle, if you believe in your God. I believe in God and God knows that I believe in him»*

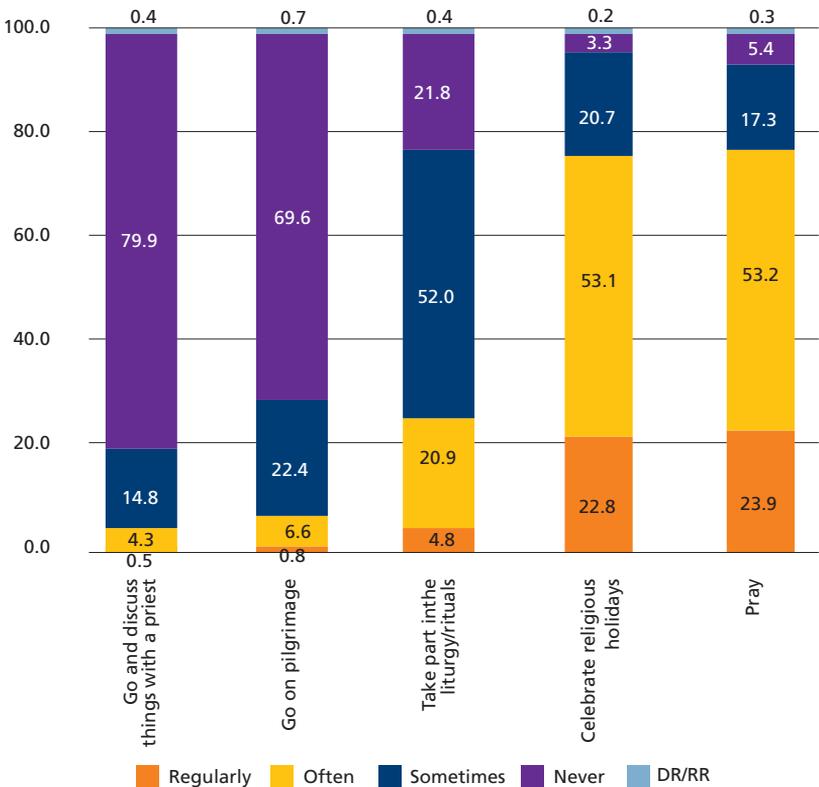
(24-year-old male, regional town).

The youth believe their family’s upbringing plays an important role in transferring Christian values and norms to them.

«For example, I differentiate the phrase «religious education». It is possible to have faith, but not live with that lifestyle. I know lots of families who pray before eating or go to church every Sunday. Those are things, attributes which have to be taught; for example, the prayer that they say before eating—my father taught me that»

(19-year-old female, regional town).

Figure 6.11: How often do you?



For Armenian youth, Christianity is the main driving force in the country's history and an important part of Armenian identity—not only in society in Armenia, but also from the perspective of self-presentation in the international context.

*«For example, there was a situation when I was in another country, when they asked me what nationality I was. The first thing that came to mind was that we adopted Christianity first and I am glad that I am Christian»*

(29-year-old male, Yerevan).

In this way, Christianity is perceived in the context of history as a phenomenon symbolising the statehood and freedom of the Armenians.

*«Yes, I consider myself to be an Armenian Christian. Yes, that's how I see it. Those two are inseparable: my being Armenian decided my being Christian»*

(26-year-old male, village community).

### (In)tolerance and Social Space

As far as the tolerance of youth to people belonging to different groups/communities, the picture is as follows: the vast majority of youth do not want homosexuals to be their neighbours and/or live in their community; 81 per cent of respondents opposed the idea. (Figure 6.12). At the same time, however, tolerance and/or indifference towards homosexuals is relatively higher amongst the females. Considering themselves representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church and followers of the church's traditions, the youth participating in the FGDs express intolerance towards homosexuals, which is uttered for example in the following quotes:

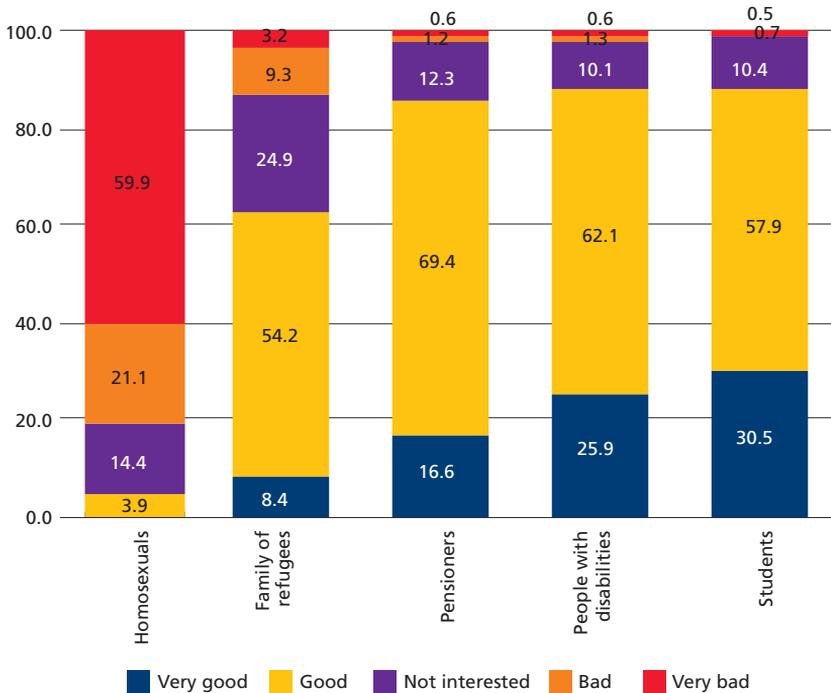
*«The Bible, Christianity, our Church, does not accept homosexuals—it is a sin»*

(25-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«Let us say, that if the Europeans accept it [homosexuality], they say, <that's their business>. We are polluting our national roots, our Christian belief. That cannot be»*

(20-year-old female, Yerevan).

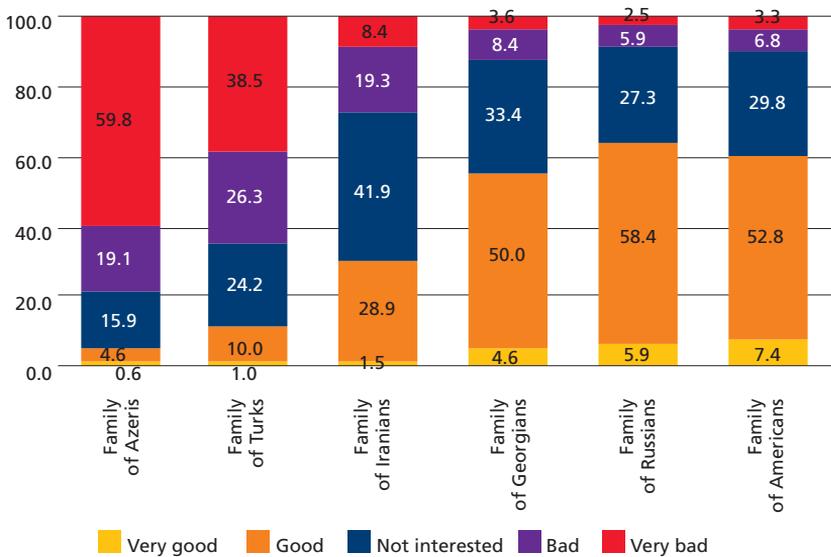
**Figure 6.12: How would you feel if one of the following people moved into your neighbourhood?**



78.9 per cent want to maintain social distance from Azeris, and 64.8 per cent from Turks (**Figure 6.13**). Having Iranians (non-Christian) in their neighbourhood is considered unacceptable by 27.7 per cent of the respondents. Intolerance towards foreign potential neighbours (Americans, Russians, Georgians) is at lower than the intolerance manifested towards refugee families. 12.5 per cent of the respondents exhibited negative perceptions towards refugees living in the neighbourhood. The youth have almost no issues having people with special needs, pensioners, and students in their neighbourhood.

During the FGDs, the young people often refer to other beliefs in order to present themselves as Christians. In this sense, it is noticeable, for example, that they attributed Islam with brutality, consolidity and punitiveness.

Figure 6.13: How would you feel if one of the following families moved into your neighborhood?



«We need to maintain our values, be forgiving, compromising, yielding, each of us criticise ourselves. Our religion professes that, unlike Muslims who are not forgiving and brutally punish those who breach the rules of the Koran»

(23-year-old female, village community).

At the same time, Islam is sometimes perceived as a belief that assumes more consolidated believers. This is expressed in the following quote:

«Amongst Muslims, in the given Muslim state, religion is considered a very strong factor. The ideology of religion is deeply rooted in the life they lead. That's why they can maintain their unity. In other words, when they say, «Allah will curse you» they take that very seriously. Unfortunately we Christians do not look at that question completely»

(27-year-old male, village community).

Some of the youth participating in the FGDs were tolerant of other beliefs; while others believe that if the person opposite you is not Christian, then you must be wary because their value system and identity are different from the value system and identity of Armenians.

*«It seems to me that all religions are equally strong and it does not matter—a man remains a man, whichever religion he believes in, be it Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or Judaism»*

(21-year-old female, Yerevan.)

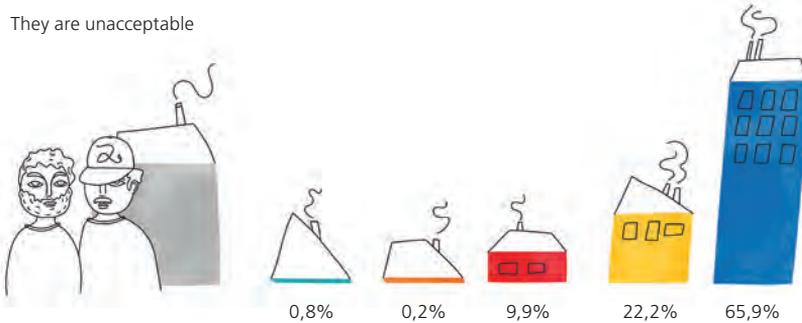
*«We [Armenians] were the first nation to adopt Christianity. That has come from 301. We all, inside ourselves, believe. It doesn't matter whether we go to church every day or once a week. For example, every time I walk past a church, I have to cross myself. Everyone expresses their belief in their way ...»*

(25-year-old male, regional town).

The level of tolerance and/or indifference towards Turks is relatively higher in urban respondents ( $X^2=16,346$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.117$ ), and that towards homosexuals is relatively higher in females ( $X^2=53,164$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.211$ ). It is important to note that 42.9 per cent of the youth who find homosexuals acceptable ( $N=49$ ) do not want them to live in their neighbourhood, while 26.5 per cent are indifferent to the question (Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.14: How would you feel if a homosexual person or couple moved into your neighbourhood?

They are unacceptable



They are neither acceptable nor unacceptable



They are acceptable



● Very good ● Good ● Not interested ● Bad ● Very bad

## Discussion

In the process of self-identification for contemporary youth in Armenia, citizenship is not considered important as a factor that currently defines a nation. Ethno-symbolic elements (ethnicity and religion) and belonging to a family are of central importance in self-definition. Nevertheless, religion is mainly presented as a symbolic attribute—an expression of Armenian ethnic identity—and is not linked to the processes of establishing statehood or civic self-awareness. The family is considered a more important value, and the relatively low level of confidence in civil society and state institutions are viewed against the background of the valuation of the family. If, in the Western model the legitimate form of social organisation is the state, for Armenian society it is the family (Vermishyan 2015).

This problem also manifests itself in the context of young people's social passiveness and/or the inadequacy of their intentions to be socially involved. The survey's findings show that a small section of the youth are involved in social/voluntary activities, and for a great number of those involved the reason for doing voluntary work are more rational—being employed, putting their professional knowledge into practice, acquiring new friends, meeting possible employers—and rarely are they based on the intention to help others. From this point of view, the tendency, which is typical of post-Soviet societies, to prioritise personal gain over public good can be observed (Skrebyte, Garnett & Kendal 2016). On the other hand, it is important to stress the absence of formal mechanisms for the introduction of volunteering. In particular, voluntary work is not regulated by Armenian legislation; consequently, legal gaps and the absence of overall standards give rise to different interpretations concerning volunteering (Transparency International Anticorruption Center 2011). Based on the findings of the survey it is generally possible to see in the perceptions of youth, the distorted attitudes to collectivism that have been inherited from the Soviet mentality of the older generation, which are characterised by inconsistency between speech and action and more pronounced in the contradictions between the symbolic and ideological content of folk sayings and the real mode of action of the youth.

In conditions of a low level of generalised trust, identification/differentiation based on ethnic-religious bases, and isolation into primary social groups (particularly familial) of the youth in Armenia, the problem of the cohesion

of youth in society arises (Social Cohesion Survey 2011). These problems are manifested in the context of tolerance towards different ethnic and social groups, which is particularly low towards non-Christian groups and categories and those with non-traditional gender orientation. To preserve their cultural and religious values, Armenians have historically been sensitive to inflows of novel attitudes and change in dispositions about traditional gender roles (see Gevorgyan 2011). This has functioned as a self-protecting mechanism, to avoid losing ethnicity. Moreover, a relatively low level of social isolation and a higher level of civic engagement and tolerance is observed in females.

To examine religion more closely, the figure for the Armenian Apostolic adherents was only 33.9 per cent in 1970 (in Soviet Armenia), while after a few years of independence this number grew to 73.4 per cent in mid-1995 and to 78.2 per cent in mid-2000 (Barrett et al. 2001). Around 76 per cent of the Armenian public exhibited trust in religious institutions in Armenia (CB 2013). According to Sarkissian (2008), the lack of religious pluralism in Armenia is correlated with a lack of diversity in social and political views. Findings also show that the religious views and values of today's youth in Armenia do not guide them towards world citizenship or European identity, which creates a basis for further study. In general, to solve the key issue of a citizen's national identity in an independent state, it is also important to consider social policy—as a factor securing social integration and legitimacy of the political system—to be a most important sphere of state government, alongside religious education.

# FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

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## Introduction

In Armenian society, the family is traditionally perceived as one of the most important values. This is noticeable in the findings in the previous sections, concerning the importance of the family factor. Nevertheless, not yielding its place and meaning to other values, the family is undergoing certain transformations: the age of marriage is higher, the number of children is fewer, and the custom of living together with parents in extended families has given way to young people's desire to live separately from their parents (Manukyan et al. 2012: 193). At the same time, just as before, the family is the primary link in the support of its members. A recent study shows that youth have strong family ties and their behaviour is greatly controlled by the family (Roberts et al. 2009a). However due to emigration from Armenia, many families are being split, with one part in Armenia and the other abroad (Tarkhnishvili et al. 2005). Moreover, men mainly leave for work abroad, while women and children stay in Armenia. Thus, the traditional family has become the long-distance family. All of this has an impact on the lifestyle and mentality of the youth. In this section of the study, findings are presented on the attachment to the family by the youth, and the existing social control and support shown by the family towards the youth. Findings are presented concerning decision-making, living in- or outside of the family, and family planning.

## Main Findings

- 87.8 per cent of the youth unequivocally note that the main aim of their life is to make their parents proud.
- Only 8.8 per cent of urban families consist of eight or more persons; 20.6 per cent of respondents in rural areas live in such families.

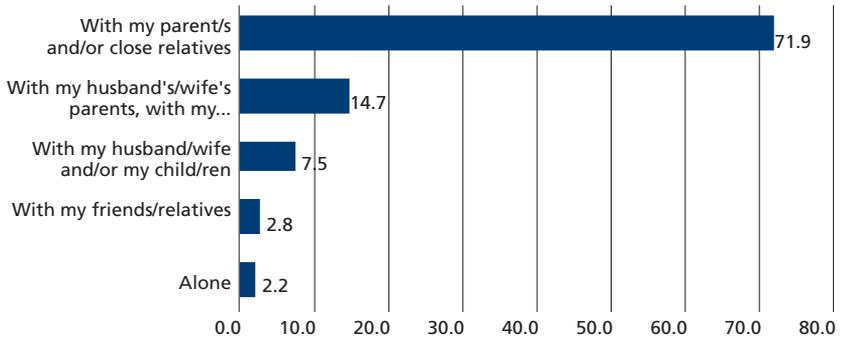
- ▶ The most influential family member for respondents is the father (51.3 per cent), the mother (18.8 per cent), the husband (15.8 per cent), and the brother (2.1 per cent).
- ▶ The role of the husband is influential in decision-making for 84.5 per cent of married women in the rural areas and 77 per cent of married women in urban areas; but, while only 13 per cent of husbands in rural areas stress the influence of their wives, married men in urban areas do not stress it at all.
- ▶ The majority of those questioned (57.6 per cent) note that the best age for marriage for men is 25 to 27, while 20.4 per cent of the respondents consider the noted age the best for female and 47.1 per cent consider the best age for female to be between 22 and 24.
- ▶ 70.6 per cent of the respondents definitely want to have one daughter. 52.3 per cent want at least one son. 46.3 per cent want to have two or more sons, while 26.2 per cent want to have two or more daughters.
- ▶ The majority of female respondents (64 per cent) consider up to 25 to be the preferable age to have children, while 85 per cent of men consider the preferable age to be over 25.

## Analysis

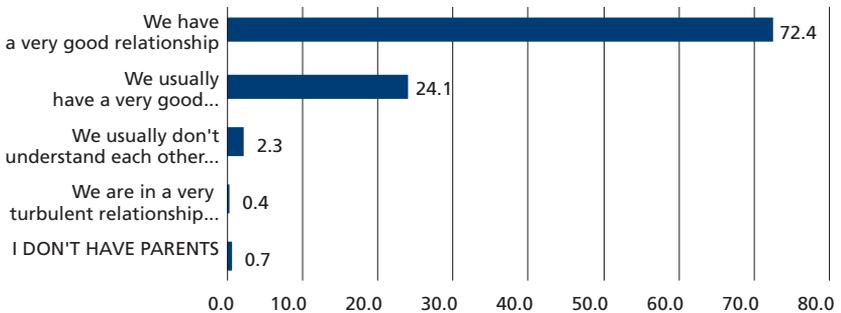
### Relationships with Parents

The role of parents is very important in the lives of youth in Armenia, to the extent that 87.8 per cent unreservedly note that their main aim in life is to make their parents proud. The findings concerning living together or separately from their parents are evidence of the young people's attachment and closeness to them, as well as the high level of trust in them. The majority (71.9 per cent) of respondents have lived with their parents within the last year—of these, 73.4 per cent have lived in their parents' home, and 14 per cent with their spouse's parents. Only 7.5 per cent have lived separately with their spouse and/or children. 28 per cent of the respondents have lived in the homes of friends/relatives, while only 2.2 per cent have lived alone (**Figure 7.1**).

It is noteworthy that 1.8 per cent of the respondents live in rented apartments, which they pay for themselves, and 0.3 per cent live in student residences. It is also important to note that 77.8 per cent of the youth have their own room, though only 40 per cent live in a home with four or more rooms.

**Figure 7.1: Whom have you been living with throughout the last year?**

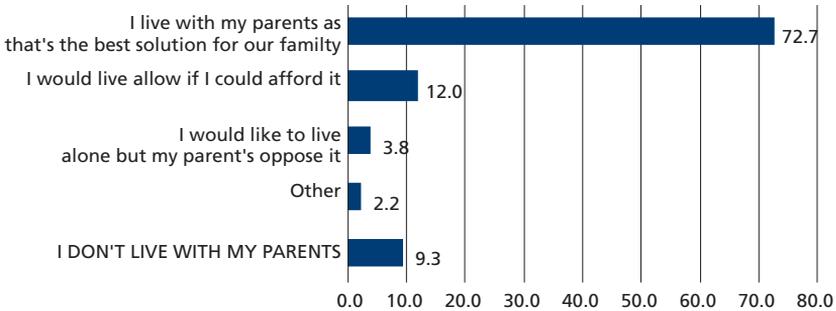
According to the respondents, the main reason for living with parents is that from socio-domestic, financial-economic, and other points of view, such a solution is the correct one for their families. This is probably due to the fact that they have such good relationships with their parents, which is noted by 72.4 per cent of them (Figure 7.2), while only 2.7 per cent mention arguing or having conflicts with their parents. Only 15.8 per cent of the youth want to live alone if the opportunity arises (Figure 7.3). That desire becomes more emphasised as age increases. ( $X^2=80,144$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.160$ ).

**Figure 7.2: Which of the following statements best describes your relationship with your parents?**

The respondents mainly live in four-member (28.2 per cent), five-member (24.4 per cent), and six-member (14.9 per cent) households. The number of seven-

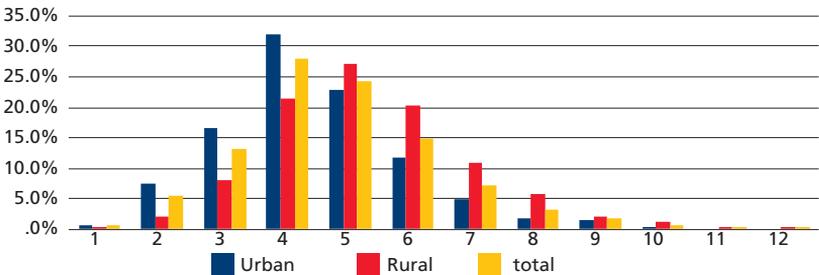
member and eight-member households is also relatively high (7.1 and 3.4 per cent respectively) (Figure 7.4).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we encountered households with seven or more members in urban areas (8.8 per cent) and in rural areas (20.6 per cent).

Figure 7.3: Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



In particular, the older generation in village families play a big role in the socialisation of the youth, in the sense of preserving and transferring traditions. This factor is manifested in the answers of 60.7 per cent of the youth; in their opinion, the village is currently the preserver of national values and traditions. Moreover, that is the opinion of 72.9 per cent of respondents in rural areas and 53.4 per cent of those in urban areas.

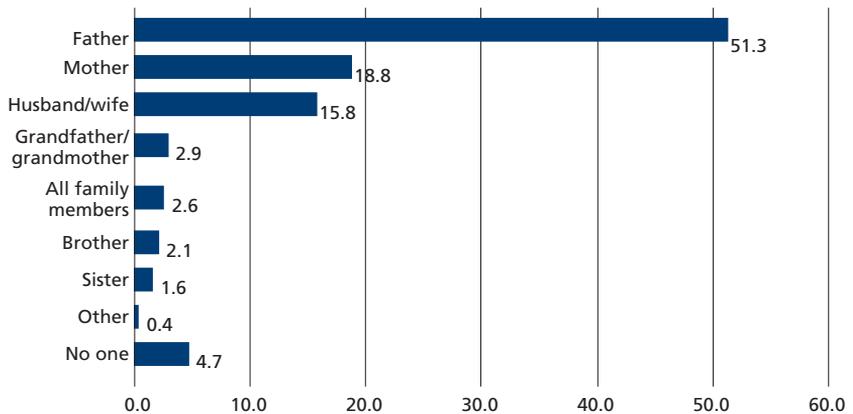
Figure 7.4: How many persons live in your household, including you?



<sup>13</sup> Altogether: N=1193, Mean=4.78, Std=1.629, Mdn=5; city: N=747, Mean=4.46, Std=1.517, Mdn=4; village: N=446, Mean=5.33, Std=1.667, Mdn=5.

The patriarchal structure of the family affects the respondents' answers to the following question: who is the most influential member of the family when it comes to important decision-making? The answer is the father for 51.3 per cent of the youth, the mother (18.8 per cent), the spouse (15.8 per cent), and the brother (2.1 per cent) (Figure 7.5). The collegial principle—that is, when everyone is given the same importance in decision-making—works in only 2.6 per cent of the respondents' families. For another 4.7 per cent, the answer was: no one.

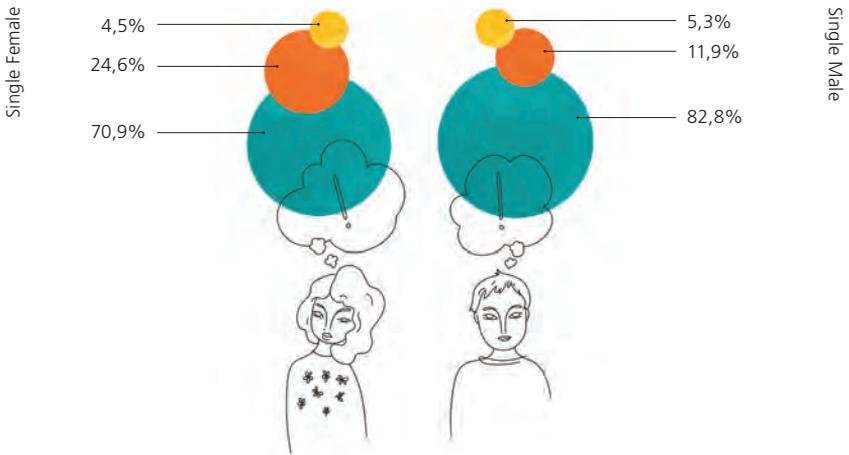
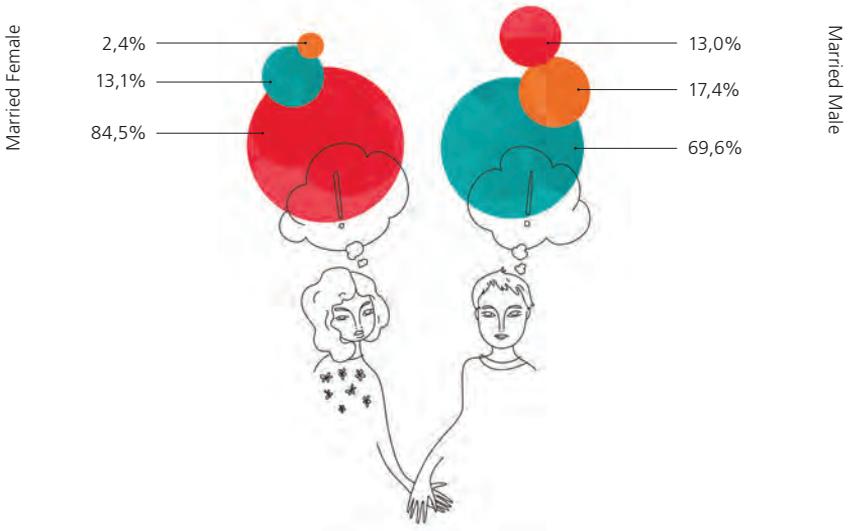
**Figure 7.5: Among your family members, who has the most influence on your important decisions?**



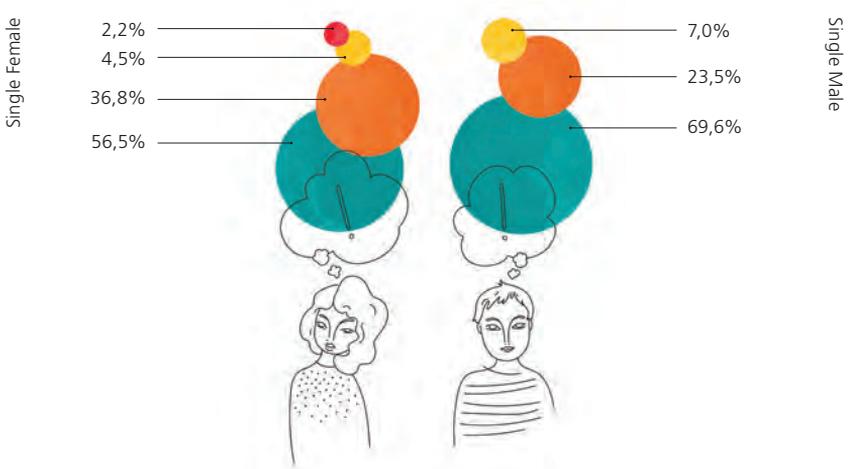
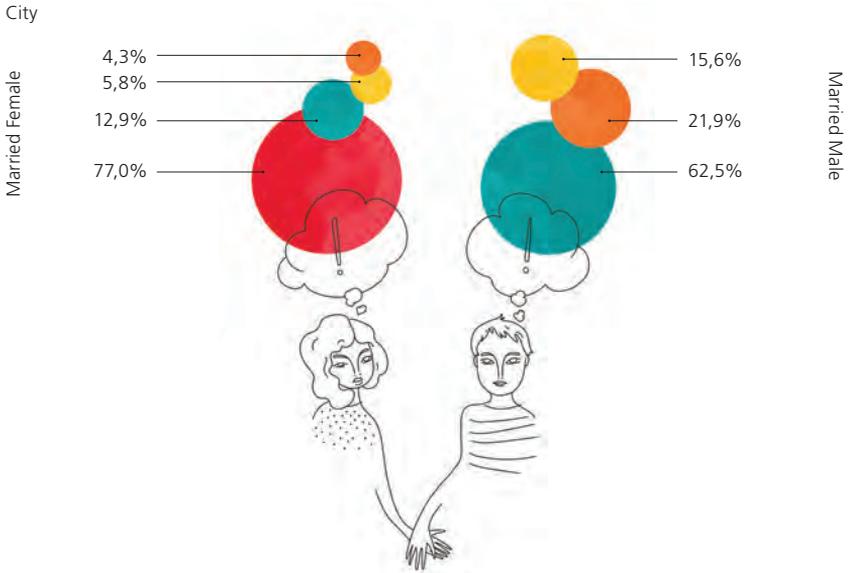
Depending on the respondents' gender, age, residence, and marital status, the answers to the question about the most influential players in decision-making also changes ( $X^2=165,764$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=0.392$ ,  $X^2=245,911$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.275$ ,  $X^2=21,482$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.141$ ,  $X^2=591,550$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.746$ , respectively). The role of the husband is influential in decision-making for 84.5 per cent of married women in the rural regions and 77.0 per cent of married women in urban areas; but, while only 13 per cent of husbands in rural areas stress the influence of their wives, married men in urban areas do not stress it at all. The influential role played by their fathers is particularly stressed for male and female respondents in rural areas (82.8 and 70.9 per cent respectively). Married men in urban areas are more conspicuous in their independence (15.6 per cent). The role of the mother is particularly stressed in the answers given by single women (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6: Among your family members, who has the most influence on your important decisions?

Village



● Father ● Mother ● Husband/Wife ● No one



● Father ● Mother ● Husband/Wife ● No one

The findings of the FGDs further emphasise the parents’ demands and social control.

«Of course, we must move according to what parents say»

(15-year-old female, village community).

According to qualitative findings—in particular concerning the lifestyle of adolescent girls—the supervision of an older brother or the image of an older brother, is palpable.

«My brother can come home at 1 [am] ... but my mother has never once asked him where he was. My brother is already a man. He has his responsibilities. But if I come home late ... my brother won't allow it»

(17-year-old female, Yerevan).

«There are boys who are against their sisters having male friends»

(15-year-old female, village community).

«It is important for my brother that his sister acts in such a way that they don't say, *your sister is such and such a girl* so that he doesn't walk with his head hung low»

(14-year-old female, village community).

It is understandable that the definition of what is possible and what is not—particularly for adolescent girls—is based on current gender stereotypes. Furthermore, family supervision and intervention is more noticeable in the lives of girls than boys. In general, coming home late in the evening is unacceptable for females of all ages.

Moreover, «out» in this case means not in her home. In other words, if the girl is not in her home at that time, independent of where she is, she is «out». The supervision of the community in girls' lives—through gossip and advice from neighbours—is particularly strong in village communities and in regional towns.

«Well, it's a village. Even if you make one mistake ... came home late or seen with a boy, then... the end ...»

(24-year-old, female, village community).

*«You come home at 11 and they say, «How shameful, coming home at this hour! What will the neighbours think?» There's such a thing among Armenians»*

(20-year-old female, Yerevan).

The word «end» in the earlier quote means that gossip will spread about the girl and that she does not follow the accepted rules of moral behaviour. Parental supervision over boys mainly concerns education, with the aim to ensure that the boys view school or university education seriously. Also, according to FGD participants, there are frequent disagreements between boys and their parents concerning Internet use.

*«The adults think that the Internet is the worst thing and do not think that the youth can get information from there»*

(17-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«They just say we should go online less; it's not good for the eyes and one's vision to sit in front of the computer that much»*

(16-year-old male, regional town).

Boy-girl relationships are also built on mutual supervision and particularly among adolescents, under conditions of community supervision.

*«Boys' mentality is different; we [girls] don't understand them»*

(15 year-old female, village community).

*«Boys are always criticising girls for their behaviour. It's only at exam time that the boys and girls in the classroom become friends; the rest of the time, it's always war [laughs]»*

(16-year-old female, regional town).

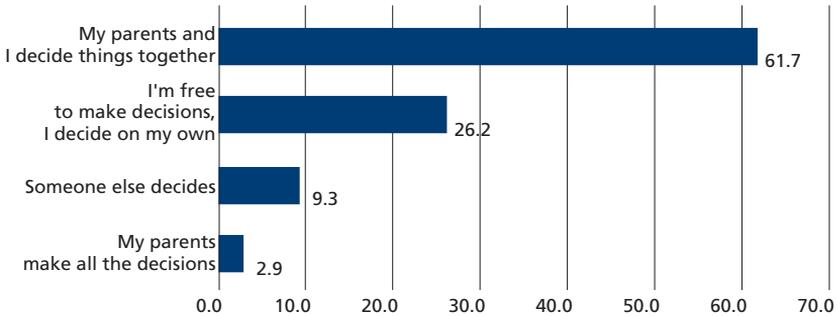
*«For example, at school age, you fall in love, and start to date. That's bad in itself isn't it? They think badly of it; society doesn't accept it. How can they love each other at school age?»*

(17-year-old male, regional town).

As far as decision-making is concerned, 61.7 per cent of the respondents make decisions together with their parents and 26.1 per cent decide by themselves.

In general, 12.2 per cent of the respondents were not independent—in 9.3 per cent of these cases, someone else takes the decision in their place, and in 2.9 per cent this is done by their parents (Figure 7.7).

**Figure 7.7: How do you take important decisions?**



It is also noteworthy that the gender, age, residence, and marital status of the youth are also significant here: parents make decisions, particularly for unmarried youth, while the «someone else takes all the decisions» option is generally noted by married women, underlining the role of the husband here.

Armenian youth stress the role of the family—particularly parents—which is also expressed when making such fateful decisions as marriage. The consent of the family is considered important by 80.1 per cent.

Within the frames of each topic discussed in the FGDs, the youth speak about family, parents' opinions, and children. We come across the word «family» at least 35 times during each FGD. Even a neighbourhood or class, if it is a good one, is defined as *family*. Being a good friend is characterised by the statement, «*how you would behave towards your brother or sister*». This is evidence that the youth in Armenia attach great importance to their family as a social value and link their concerns and ideas to the family.

«*The family comes first, then the rest*»

(23-year-old female, village community).

*«My family has instilled in me that family is the most important thing in life and independent of what specialisation you have, what work, what career, the most important thing is having and protecting a good family and children»*

(26-year-old female, regional town).

*«I have a good family where there is mutual understanding and unity. When you have that, you strive for just one thing, a good education for your children. You appreciate human values, so that you are kind, a benevolent and good friend, good mother, good daughter; for men it is being a good father, good son and for them it is also having a good job»*

(23-year-old female, village community).

*«I attach great importance to closeness, and correct Armenian upbringing in the family, because every woman wants to raise her child in a good, healthy family and have good contacts with others; men want to have a good, faithful wife and stable family»*

(27-year-old female, regional town).

The following quotes express the general response given by males in answer to the question, «What aims do youth have?»

*«They aim to find a normal job and start a family»*

(20-year-old male, regional town).

*«We want to be employed, save a little money so that we can marry and support a family»*

(24-year-old male, village community).

*«Every boy wants to have a god job, start a family and support his family»*

(23-year-old male, Yerevan).

*«Our aims are closely linked to the well-being of the family, so that we can create conditions where our families, our children can live in better conditions»*

(29-year-old male, Yerevan).

Amongst the youth, the idea of family is linked to social perceptions transmitted from generation to generation, which assume that family is an indis-

putable value for each individual and should have a corresponding structure. Noticeable here are the pronounced nationalistic ideas—such as an Armenian should marry an Armenian, and in Armenian families the socially legitimate relationships of older and younger, parent and child should be maintained otherwise the person who does not have such a family is perceived as socially vulnerable.

*«The concept of family is so important, that they marry and are forced to stay together because divorce is not allowed»*

(26-year-old male, regional town).

The social taboo towards divorce is obvious from the quote.

For young people—in the sense of personal values—the fundamental space begins in the parents' family and ends in their own family. It is built on the model of the parents' family, if that conforms to the standards of a «good» family. According to qualitative findings, a «good» family is considered to be a large one that displays mutual assistance and is harmonious, traditional, stable, with faithful members, represents the closed circle for Armenian youth, which is inviolable to social influence and cannot be changed by any «external» danger. Perhaps in each young person's social circle the first link is the family, which presents itself as a closed social space to the outside world. And although the first social supervision of young people is conducted by the family itself, the youth unequivocally and without prejudice express only confidence in family members.

The unconditional mutual trust is vividly expressed in adolescent circles—in mother-daughter, father-son relationships.

*«I share things with my mother on the whole. No mother wishes bad things for their daughter»*

(18-year-old female, village community).

Frequently the youth especially mention that friendship in the family is the second fundamental value (this was mentioned in all of the FGDs). Moreover, the transition between family and friend is delicate. First, the family itself also represent friendship space.

«There must be friends in the family»

(25-year-old female, regional town).

«Your first friend is your family. Your life is easier if there is friendship in the family»

(27-year-old female, village community).

«You probably trust your friend for a short time but your family, for a long time. In the family you can be friends with your child, your parents, and your husband»

(24-year-old female, Yerevan).

It is interesting that only females in the age group 21–29 tend to equate family space and friendship space. This shows that in their social circle, the links of family and friendship narrow and equate over time. The fact that many of the female respondents in the same age group do not accept that it is possible to have friendships with men is also proof of the aforesaid.

«When you get married, have a husband or wife, it is not normal ... I personally do not want my husband to have a close girlfriend. There may be issues he won't discuss with me, but will discuss with her»

(26-year-old female, Yerevan).

At a younger age, especially in the early teens, the youth may sometimes have something or other to hide.

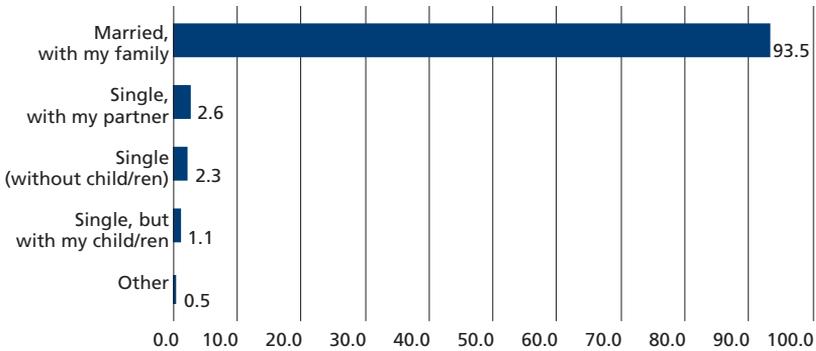
«There are times when you cannot sit with the members of the family and discuss and share that issue, or discuss one or other issue with your boyfriend but you can do so with your girlfriend»

(16-year-old female, village community).

## Marriage

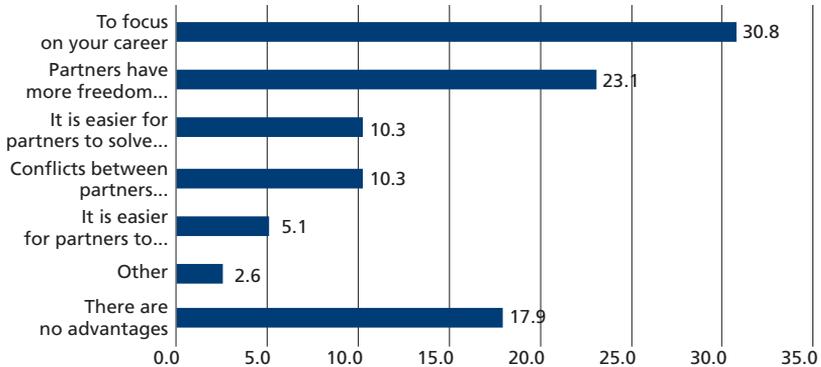
93.5 per cent of the respondents saw themselves in the future as married with a family while only 6 per cent saw themselves single (2.6 per cent with a partner, 2.3 per cent without children, and 1.1 per cent with just children) (**Figure 7.8**).

Figure 7.8: How do you see yourself in the future?



Those who saw themselves unmarried but in relationships with partners (N=39, 16 female, 23 male) list among the advantages of such relationships, the possibility of focusing on their career (30.8 per cent). In the opinion of 10.3 per cent of the respondents, there are fewer chances for conflicts between partners and it is easier for partners to solve disagreements; on the other hand, the greater level of freedom between partners was emphasised (23.1 per cent) and the ease of separating in case of problems (5.1 per cent) (Figure 7.9). In the opinion of 17.9 per cent of those not wanting to get married, there was no advantage to not getting married but living with a partner.

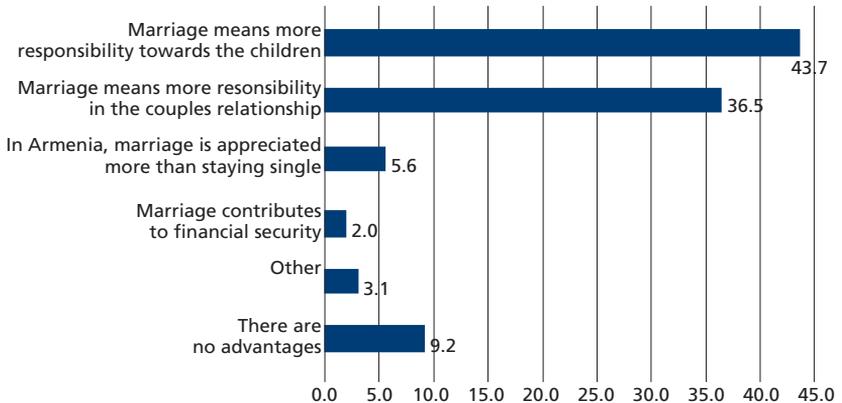
Figure 7.9: In your opinion, what is the main advantage of cohabitation (unmarried couple living together) over marriage?



The respondents emphasised the greater level of responsibility as the main advantage of marriage, while 43.7 per cent noted that marriage means greater responsibility towards children, and 36.5 per cent mentioned that marriage means greater responsibility from the viewpoint of the couple's relationship.

In general, being responsible is a very fashionable value for 56.8 per cent of the youth (Figure 7.11): this is the opinion of 61.4 per cent of the male respondents and 53.6 per cent of the female respondents ( $X^2=8,282$ ,  $p=.016$ , Cramer's  $V=.083$ ). In other words, the value traditionally attributed to Armenian men and the anticipated corresponding behaviour have not lost their relevance. It is characteristic that 5.6 per cent of the respondents think that the main advantage in Armenia is that being married is valued more than being unmarried (Figure 7.10).

**Figure 7.10: In your opinion, what is the main advantage of marriage over cohabitation (unmarried couple living together)?**



Thus, the absolute majority of respondents would prefer to have a family and children. Only 1.2 per cent of them do not want children, and only 19.5 per cent think that being married and having children is not fashionable (Figure 7.11).

The majority of male respondents (57.6 per cent) think that the best age for men to marry is between 25 and 27 ( $N=1188$ ,  $Mean=26.41$ ,  $Std=2.796$ ,  $Mdn=26$ ). 20.4 per cent of the respondents consider the noted age as the best

for women and for 47.1 per cent, the best age for marriage is 23 and 25 (N=1181, Mean=23.43, Std=2.484, Mdn=23) (Figure 7.12). Very few were in favour marriage between minors; mostly village dwelling girls.

Figure 7.11: Nowadays, how fashionable is it...?

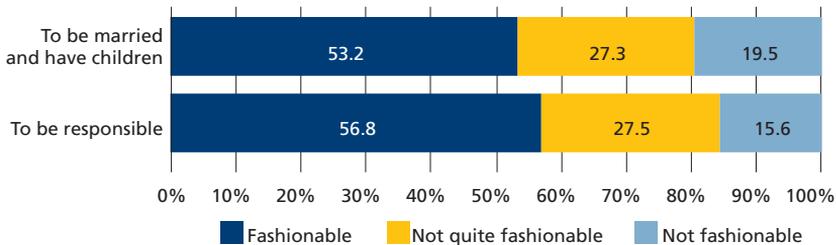
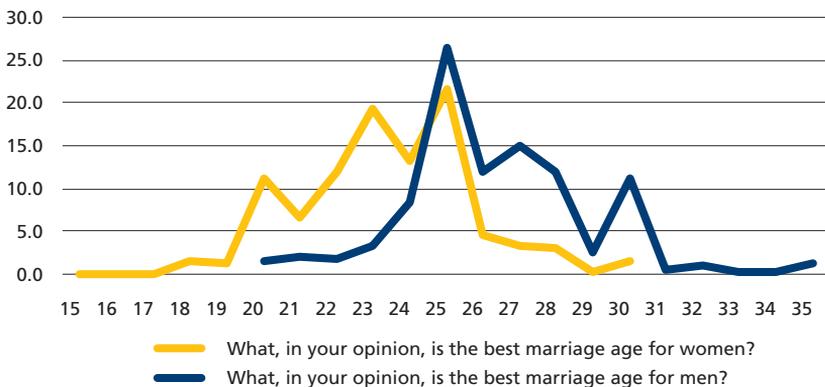


Figure 7.12: In your opinion, what is the best age for women/men to marry?

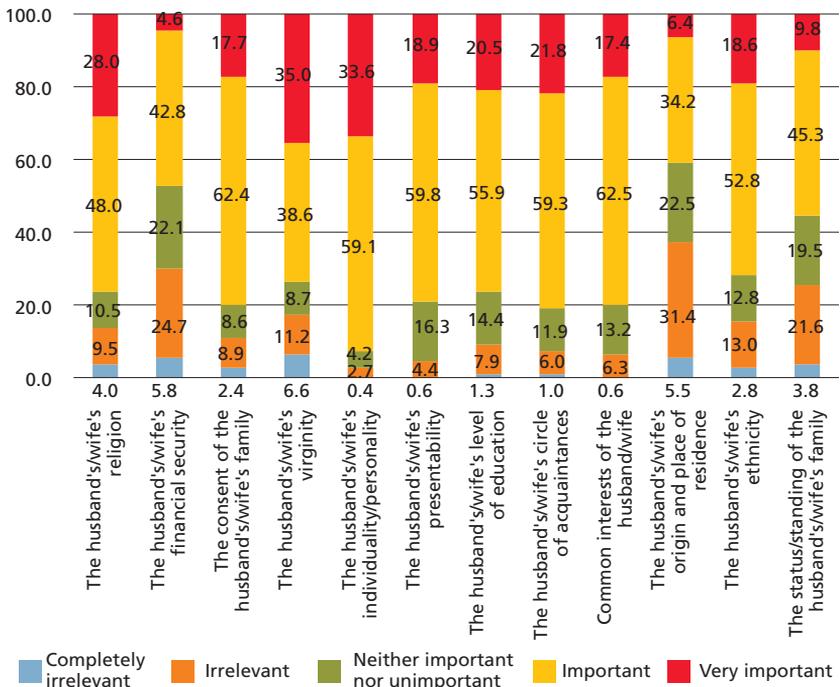


Moreover, there is a correlation between the respondents' gender, residence, and marital status and the preferred age for marriage for men and women. Thus, male respondents are inclined to note younger ages for both women and men (Mdn=23, and Mdn=25, respectively) than the female respondents (Mdn=25 and Mdn=27, respectively) (woman's age: U=220,416, z=9,170, p<.001, man's age: U=236,126, z=11,452, p<.001, respectively). Young people in rural areas are more inclined to note earlier ages for both men and women (Mdn=23 and Mdn=25, respectively) than those in urban areas (Mdn=24 and Mdn=27, re-

spectively) (woman’s age:  $U=128,038$ ,  $z=-6,354$ ,  $p<.001$ , man’s age:  $U=131,158$ ,  $z=-6,065$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively). Based on their marital status, young people’s notions about the best age for a woman to get married generally coincide; with regard to the man’s age, single respondents tend to note a younger age ( $Mdn=26$ ) than those who are married ( $U=160,646$ ,  $z=5,904$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

The important factors contributing to the choice of spouse when forming a family are distributed as follows: personality (92.7 per cent), social circle (81.1 per cent), family’s approval (80.1 per cent), mutual interests (79.9 per cent), presentability (78.7 per cent), level of education (76.4 per cent), religion (76 per cent), nationality (71.4 per cent), and virginity (73.6 per cent). Less important factors include the residence (36.9 per cent), economic security (30.5 per cent), and social position of the family (25.4 per cent).

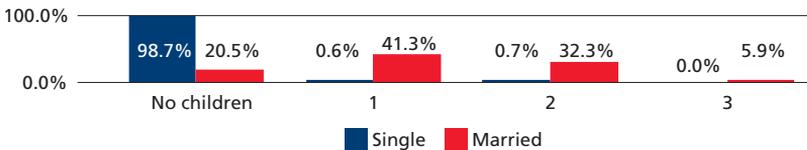
**Figure 7.13: If you are (or when you were) single, how important are (were) the following factors for the choice of your marriage partner?**



A statistically significant association has been identified between the respondents' age, gender, residence, and marital status and the importance of the factors taken into account when choosing a spouse. When choosing a husband, female respondents tend more to pay attention to their future husband's economic security, family approval, personality, and family position/status ( $X^2=181,837$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.390$ ,  $X^2=42,666$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.189$ ,  $X^2=12,896$ ,  $p=.012$ , Cramer's  $V=.104$ ,  $X^2=21,266$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.134$ , respectively). Together with an increase in age, the respondents are inclined to pay less attention to the virginity, social circle, and level of education of their future spouse ( $X^2=30,004$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.094$ ,  $X^2=26,541$ ,  $p=.009$ , Cramer's  $V=.086$ ,  $X^2=12,896$ ,  $p=.012$ , Cramer's  $V=.104$ ,  $X^2=33,456$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.096$ ). Unlike youth in urban areas, those in rural areas are more inclined to highlight religion, virginity, place of origin and residence, nationality, and family status of their future spouse ( $X^2=10,862$ ,  $p=.028$ , Cramer's  $V=.095$ ,  $X^2=35,630$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.178$ ,  $X^2=22,050$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.136$ ,  $X^2=21,153$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.133$ ,  $X^2=17,029$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.120$ , respectively). When expressing their opinion about choosing a spouse, the married respondents—unlike those who are single—place less importance on virginity, social circle, and place of origin and residence ( $X^2=25,364$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.152$ ,  $X^2=37,861$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.179$ ,  $X^2=27,553$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.153$ ,  $X^2=17,205$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.121$ ).

25.3 per cent of the respondents are married and 21.9 per cent have children—11.4 per cent one child, 8.9 per cent two children, and 1.6 per cent three children.

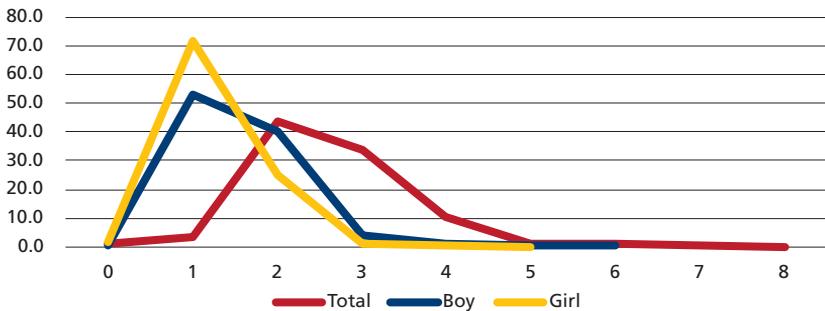
Figure 7.14: How many children do you have?



Opinions on the number of children are distributed as follows: 45.9 per cent want two children, 35.3 per cent want three, 11.1 per cent want four, 3.5 per cent want one, 1.3 per cent want five, 0.9 per cent want six, 0.5 per cent want

seven, and 0.2 per cent want eight ( $N=1199$ ,  $Mdn=3$ ). Moreover, the majority want both boys and girls: 70.6 per cent definitely want to have one girl and 52.3 per cent want at least one boy. However, in the quantitative sense, a certain preference is traditionally given to male children. 46.3 per cent want two or more boys, while that number is only 26.2 per cent in the case of girls. 8.1 per cent of the respondents refused or declined to answer the question about having male children, while that number was 14.4 per cent regarding girls. Overall, the preferred number of male ( $N=1119$ ,  $Mdn=1$ ) and female ( $N=1043$ ,  $Mdn=1$ ) children is distributed as can be seen in **Figure 7.15**.

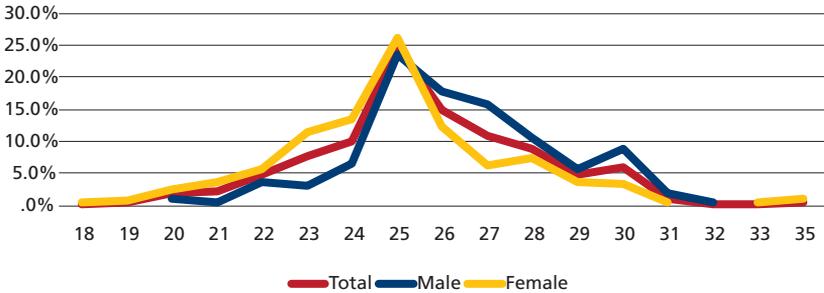
**Figure 7.15: How many children would you like to have?**



The gender of the respondents correlates to the number of children planned, particularly boys: male respondents are inclined to have more children ( $Mdn=3$ ) than female respondents ( $Mdn=2$ ) ( $U=157.231$ ,  $z=-3.022$ ,  $p=.003$ ). The same applies to the number of boys planned (males:  $Mdn=2$ , females:  $Mdn=1$ ,  $U=114.340$ ,  $z=-6.398$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

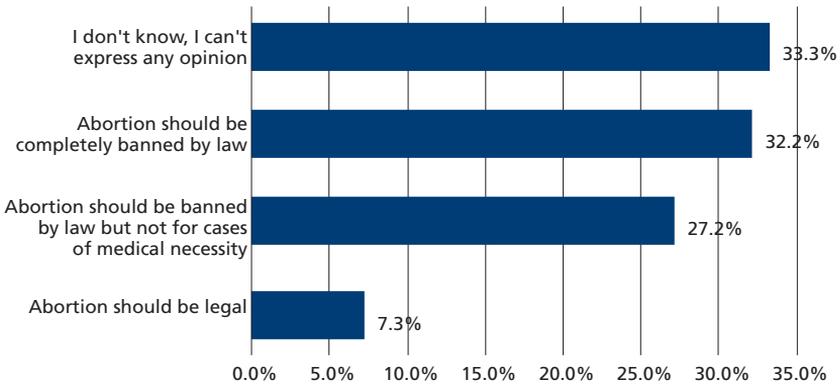
On the other hand, 21.5 per cent of the respondents already had children, while for those who did not the preferred age for having children was considered to be 25. The majority of female respondents (64.8 per cent) preferred the idea of having children up to the age of 25 ( $N=267$ ,  $Mean=24.98$ ,  $Std=2.999$ ,  $Mdn=25$ ), while 85 per cent of the male respondents preferred having children after 25 ( $N=247$ ,  $Mean=26.37$ ,  $Std=2.354$ ,  $Mdn=26$ ) ( $U=22.137$ ,  $z=-6.516$ ,  $p<.001$ ) (**Figure 7.16**).

Figure 7.16: When do you plan to have your first child?



32.2 per cent of the youth questioned are unequivocally against abortion, stressing that it should be legally prohibited. 27.2 per cent think that it should be legal only on medical grounds. 7.3 per cent said that abortion should be legal, while 33.3 per cent found it difficult to reply (39.9 per cent of these were minors) (Figure 7.17).

Figure 7.17: What is your opinion on abortion?



It must be stressed that the attitudes towards abortion are statistically linked to the gender and residence of the youth. Male respondents are more frequently in favour of making abortion illegal, while female respondents are more frequently in favour of allowing abortions on medical grounds ( $X^2=16.345$ ,

$p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .146$ ). Youth in rural areas are more frequently in favour of making abortion illegal, while those in urban areas are more frequently in favour of legalising abortions on medical grounds ( $X^2 = 11.003$ ,  $p = .004$ , Cramer's  $V = .120$ ).

## Discussion

The study revealed both the preservation of traditional traits of the Armenian family, as well as certain tendencies to update it, to be attributed to the socio-economic processes taking place in post-Soviet Armenia and the migration of the populace (Khojabekyan 2001).

The traditional firm ties between the youth and their parents are preserved in Armenian society and are characterised by an emotional high level. One of the basic aims in life for Armenian youth is to make their parents proud. Yet parents resolve economic and accommodation issues, which leads to dependency. By generalising the survey findings, it can be noted that on the whole, irrespective of their marital status, the youth live with the older generation (their own or their spouse's parents) in four- to six-person households. In urban families two-generation families are more common, while in rural families three-generation families are typical. The desire to become independent and live separately increases with age, when the youth can provide for their own living expenses.

In Armenian families, intergenerational ties stand out in the patriarchal nature of relationships. The patriarchal structure of the family manifests itself particularly in decision-making processes, where the father has the most influential role (in the case of married women, the husband). On the other hand, in the distribution of family roles, the youth consider the mother's role important but not the wife's. This is explained by the continuing reproduction of the traditional model of the family—such a description of the connection between a woman's social position and age is typical of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century traditional Armenian family (see Raffi 1991).

Gender attitudes are clearly outlined in families in Armenia. Family supervision and control are certainly firmer for girls than boys. According to the perception of the youth, manifestations of individuality are attributed to men,

while they ascribe women with mostly marital-familial roles and responsibilities (see Gender Barometer Survey: A Sociological Survey 2015).

According to the perception of youth in Armenia, the ideal family should have two to three children. For the sake of comparison, attitudes about the number of children are the same in our neighbouring country, Georgia (Caucasus Barometer 2015a). Recent studies emphasise the tendency of today's youth, unlike the older generation, to prefer having fewer children (Ibid. 2015b). Gender issues also manifest themselves in the gender preference of future children. The majority of those who hope to have three or more children prefer more boys than girls. This preference for boys has manifested itself acutely in post-Soviet Armenian society. According to demographic indicators, among 14 year-olds in Armenia, the number of boys exceeds that of girls, which is due to selective abortions (Dudwick 2015). Thus, Armenia ranks first in this region in terms of countries considered more vulnerable in this matter, such as China and India. Moreover, according to the findings of the study, it is not so much the decision of the couple that is central to this matter, as it is the pressure they face from those around them (Ibid. 2015).

Thus, perceptions of the traditional Armenian family still prevail among young people. Parallel to the informal social mechanisms for the reproduction of that traditionalism—stereotypes, customs, role and behavioural models, and so on—the social policy being realised by the government is also a specific promotional mechanism; particularly, the procedure for granting family benefits where social assistance targets are not single needy individuals, but families (RA law on state benefits 2013). Broadly speaking, the huge gender difference and traditional role models for Armenian youth come from gender socialisation (Gevorgyan 2011), persistently reproduced through the difference between male and female, (thought e.g. in the educational text-books, see Tsaturyan, 2012) transmission of non-egalitarian values from the parents to children, and the unique traditional architecture of Armenian families.

# LEISURE AND LIFESTYLE

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## Introduction

Recent surveys conducted in the Southern Caucasus show that significant changes are taking place in the leisure and lifestyle of youth in the region. Young people between the ages of 16 and 30 are separated into two groups: a) young people whose main elements of leisure are tobacco and alcohol and whose social space is the neighbourhood and home; b) young people whose leisure is characterised by sporting activities, high culture, frequenting bars, cafes, cinemas, and dance clubs (Roberts et al 2009b). Indeed, a person's everyday pursuits have a special place in the structure of his/her identity. Lifestyle depends on a person's social attitudes, moral perceptions, professed values, spiritual needs, cultural interests, preferences, and opportunities; at the same time, lifestyle is linked to the country's macroeconomic and political potentials. Hence, investigating the lifestyle of the youth in any country also means studying the macrosocial structure and culture of that country. According to the findings of a 2009 study (Manukyan et al. 2009: 178), the intensification of both the intellectual and leisure applications of the Internet generally reduces the spread of the positive attitudes of youth towards processes in Armenia.

Supposedly, the lifestyle of the youth is usually more socially dynamic as compared to other social groups (the children and the elderly) (Furlong & Cartmel 2007). In this sense, the independence generation of Armenia has broad opportunities that did not exist previously; at the same time, however, the means to use those opportunities depend on the existing socio-economic possibilities.

In this section, we present new findings for Armenia concerning how and in what social environment young people organise their leisure activities.

## Main Findings

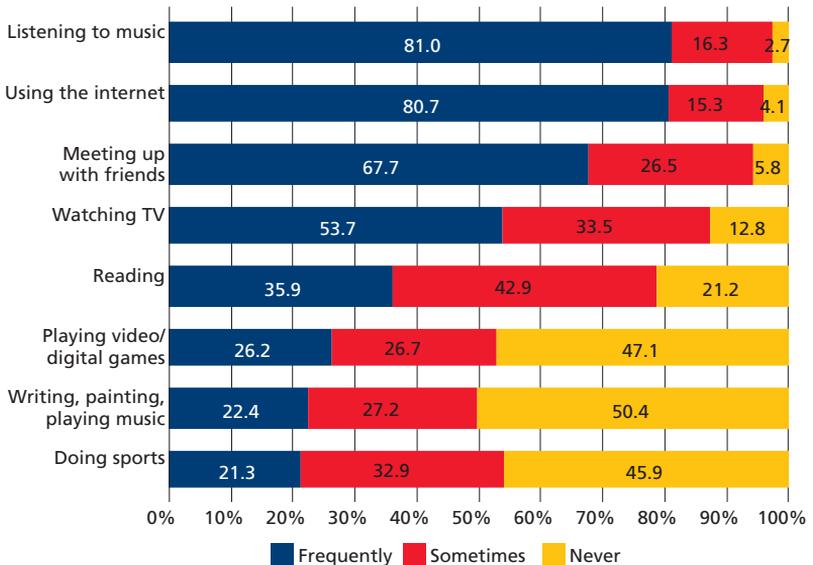
- Urban youth read books, newspapers, and journals and use the Internet more frequently than rural youth.
- Rural youth watch television and play video games more frequently than urban youth.
- Male respondents meet up with friends, play sports, and play video games more frequently than females.
- Female respondents read and create more frequently than males.
- Married respondents listen to music, meet up with friends, and play sport less frequently than those who are not married, but they watch television more frequently.
- The more money the youth spend on their personal needs, the more frequently they listen to music, meet up with friends, read, play sports, and use the Internet, the less they watch television.
- Watching television is linked to social passiveness.
- It should be noted that the youth who are employed watch less television on average than those who are unemployed. The higher the level of the parents' education, the less the youth watch television.
- As their age increases, the youth watch more Armenian films and news.
- 35.9 per cent of the youth read frequently; this is not a very high indicator when taking into account that 24.1 per cent of the respondents are pupils and 19.8 per cent are students.
- On average, respondents who are male, more mature, and live in urban areas spend more money.
- Young people's main income is their parents' financial support (49.8 per cent).
- The frequency of smoking and drinking alcohol by the youth are correlated; the more frequently they drink alcohol, the more frequently they smoke.
- 77.2 per cent of female respondents below the age of 21 note that they have no sexual experience, while 75 per cent of males of the same age already have experience.
- The Internet plays a very important role in the lives of Armenian youth and is one of their main pastimes.

## Analysis

### Pastimes

The majority (81 per cent) of the youth in Armenia frequently like to spend their free time listening to music (16.3 per cent, sometimes), 80.7 per cent frequently use the Internet (15.3 per cent, sometimes), 67.7 per cent frequently meet up with friends (26.5 per cent, sometimes), 53.7 per cent frequently watch television (33.5 per cent, sometimes), 35.9 per cent frequently read (42.9 per cent, sometimes), and 26.2 per cent frequently play video games (26.7 per cent, sometimes) (**Figure 8.1**). It should be noted that the majority of them (50.4 per cent) almost never create—write, draw, play music—while 45.9 per cent almost never participate in sports.

**Figure 8.1: How often do you engage in the following activities?**

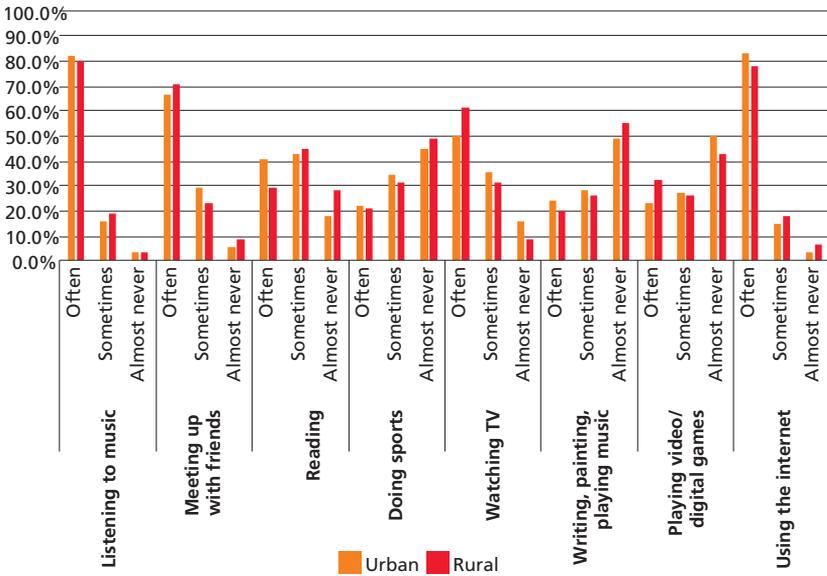


Certain pastimes correlate with each other. It must be emphasised that watching television, unlike going on the Internet, correlates negatively with meeting

up with friends, reading, and playing sports. The more the youth watch television, the less they meet up with friends, read, and play sports.

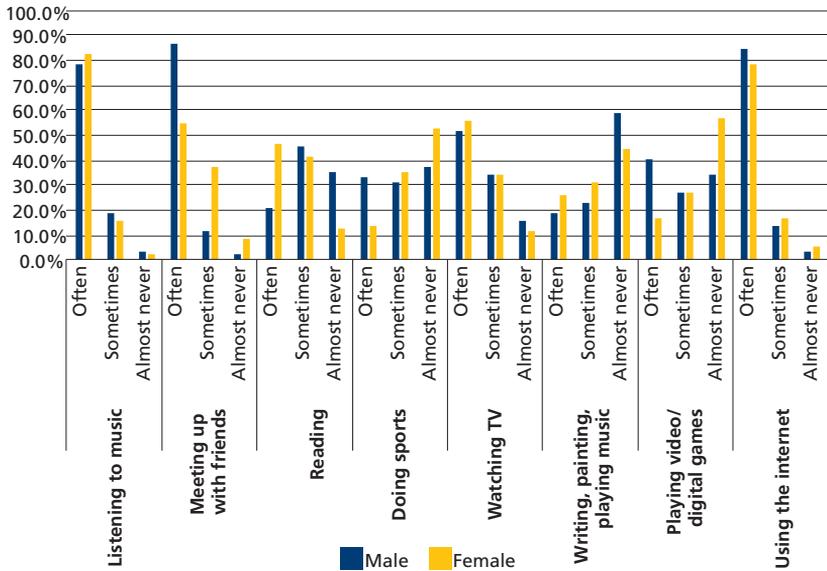
The time spent on different pastimes by the youth is statistically interconnected with the residence, gender, age, marital status, and amount spent on personal needs; in particular, urban youth read books, newspapers, and journals more frequently ( $X^2=22.694$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.138$ ) and use the Internet ( $X^2=6.167$ ,  $p<.05$ , Cramer's  $V=.072$ ) than rural youth. In contrast, rural youth watch television ( $X^2=21.657$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.134$ ) and play video games more frequently ( $X^2=11.440$ ,  $p=.003$ , Cramer's  $V=.098$ ) than urban youth (Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2: How often do you engage in the following activities? / Residence



Male respondents meet up with friends ( $X^2=136.680$ ,  $p<.001$ , =Cramer's  $V=.337$ ), play sports ( $X^2=65.448$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.234$ ), and play video games more frequently ( $X^2=91.188$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.276$ ) than females. In contrast, female respondents read, ( $X^2=126.308$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.325$ ) and create more frequently ( $X^2=24.562$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.143$ ) than males (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3: How often do you engage in the following activities? / Gender



Parallel to increased age, the youth listen to music ( $X^2=20.450$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.092$ ), meet up with friends ( $X^2=96.553$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.201$ ), play sports ( $X^2=69.565$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.170$ ), create ( $X^2=67.165$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.167$ ), play video games less frequently ( $X^2=66.092$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.166$ ). On the contrary, however, they read ( $X^2=31.207$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.114$ ) and watch television more ( $X^2=17.634$ ,  $p=.007$ , Cramer's  $V=.086$ ) (**Figure 8.4**).

Married respondents listen to music ( $X^2=15.144$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.113$ ), meet up with friends ( $X^2=147.531$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.353$ ), play sports ( $X^2=62.168$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.230$ ), create ( $X^2=8.170$ ,  $p=.017$ , Cramer's  $V=.083$ ), play video games ( $X^2=20.915$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.133$ ), and use the computer less frequently than single respondents. Those who are married watch television more frequently than those who are not married ( $X^2=48.222$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.202$ ) (**Figure 8.5**).

Figure 8.4: How often do you engage in the following activities? / Age

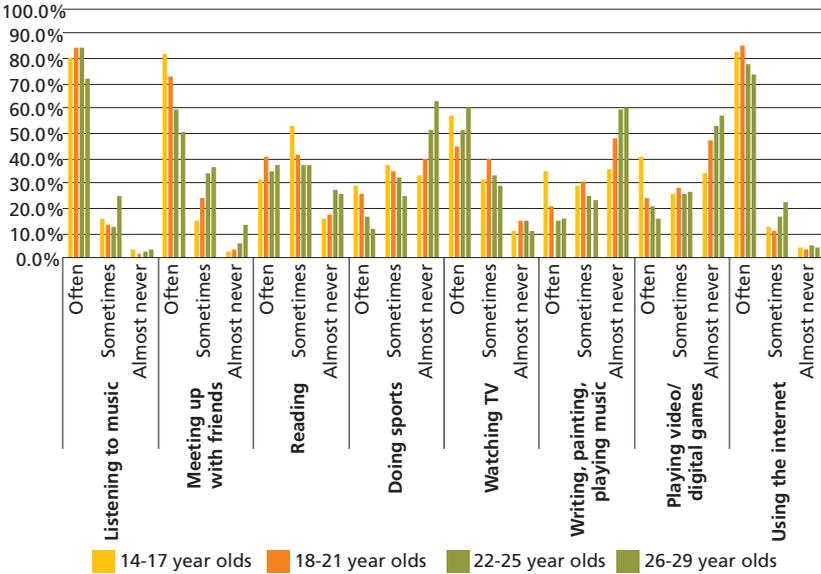
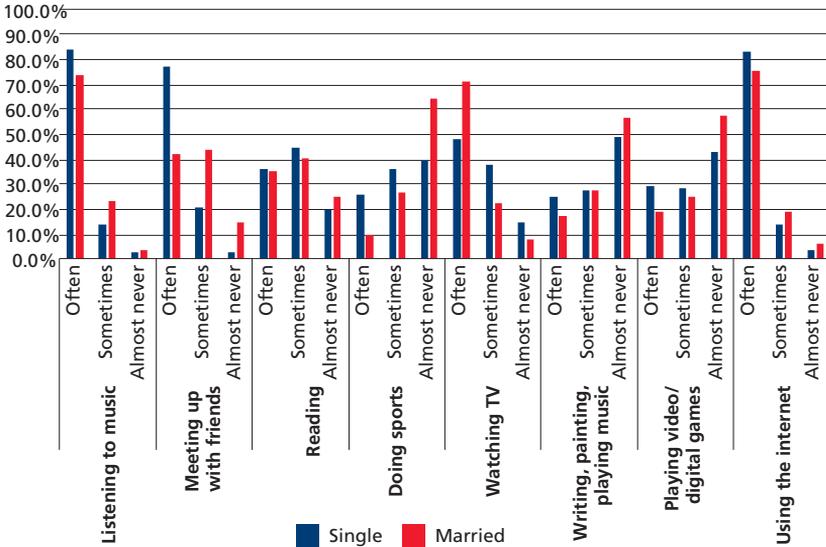
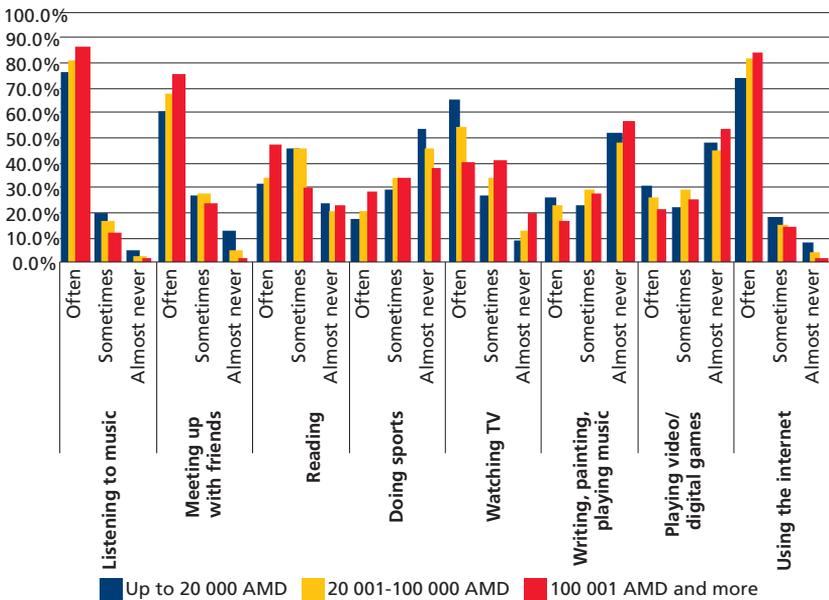


Figure 8.5: How often do you engage in the following activities? / Marital status



The more money the youth spend on their personal needs, the more frequently they listen to music ( $X^2=24.050$ ,  $p=.007$ , Cramer's  $V=.100$ ), meet up with friends ( $X^2=40.459$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.130$ ), read ( $X^2=30.836$ ,  $p=.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.113$ ), play sports ( $X^2=24.853$ ,  $p=.006$ , Cramer's  $V=.102$ ), use the computer ( $X^2=27.908$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.108$ ), and the less they watch television ( $X^2=48.139$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.142$ ) (Figure 8.6).

**Figure 8.6: How often do you engage in the following activities? / Excluding the family's fixed living expenses (bills, food, etc.), how much money do you spend on your personal needs PER MONTH?**

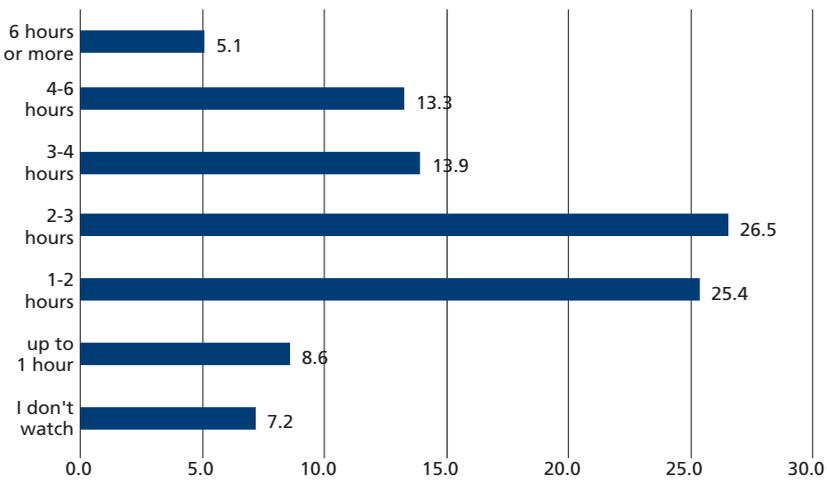


## Mass Media and the Internet

According to the observation made above, watching television correlates to social passiveness, negatively affecting the frequency of meetings with friends. Television is mainly watched by respondents who live in rural areas, are more mature, married, and have less income/expenditure. Despite this, the percentage of those who watch television is quite high, with 32 per cent of them

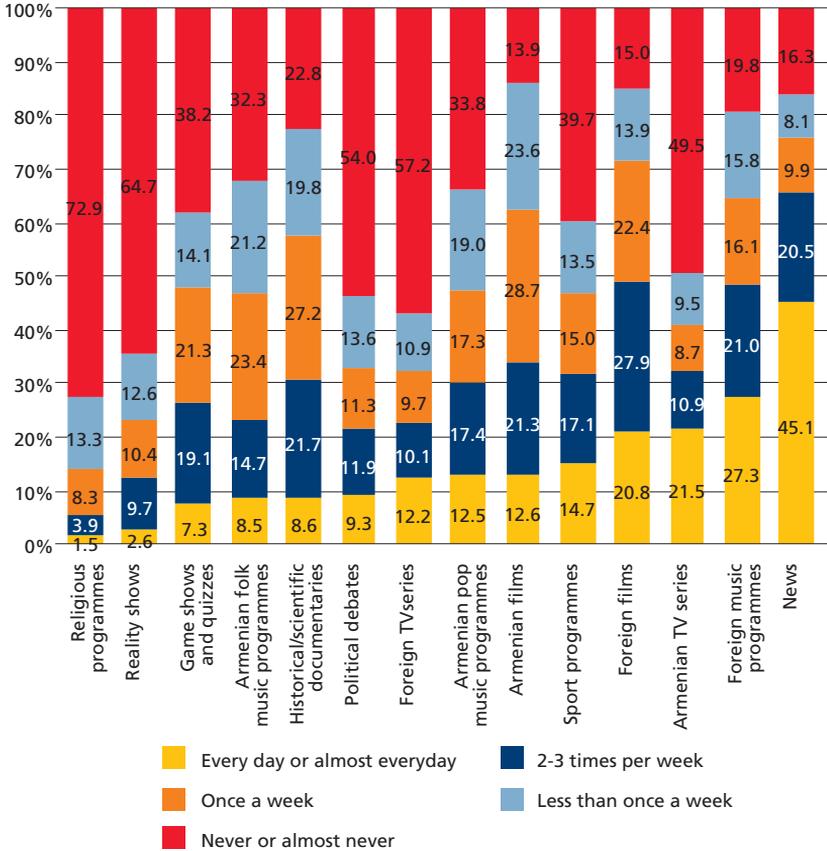
watching an average of three hours or more a day. 26.5 per cent watch television from two to three hours a day and 25.4 per cent watch one to two hours a day. Only 8.6 per cent watch less than one hour a day. 7 per cent do not watch at all (Figure 8.7). It should be noted that the employed youth (N=305, Mdn=3) watch less television on average than those who are unemployed (N=899, Mdn=4) ( $U=155.898$ ,  $z=4.186$ ,  $p<.001$ ). On the other hand, the higher the level of the parents' education, the less the young people watch television ( $X^2=48.837$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.144$ ).

Figure 8.7: How many hours a day on average do you watch TV?



It is important to clarify Armenian youth's taste in television. As seen in Figure 8.8, they frequently watch the news (daily, 45.1 per cent / at least once a week, 30.4 per cent), foreign films (daily, 20.8 per cent / at least once a week, 50.3 per cent), foreign music programmes (daily, 27.3 per cent / at least once a week, 37.1 per cent), Armenian films (daily, 12.6 per cent / at least once a week, 50 per cent), documentaries (daily, 8.6 per cent / at least once a week, 48.9 per cent). However, they «almost never» watch religious programmes (72.9 per cent), reality shows (64.7 per cent), foreign TV series (57.2 per cent), and political debates (54 per cent).

Figure 8.8: How often do you watch the following?



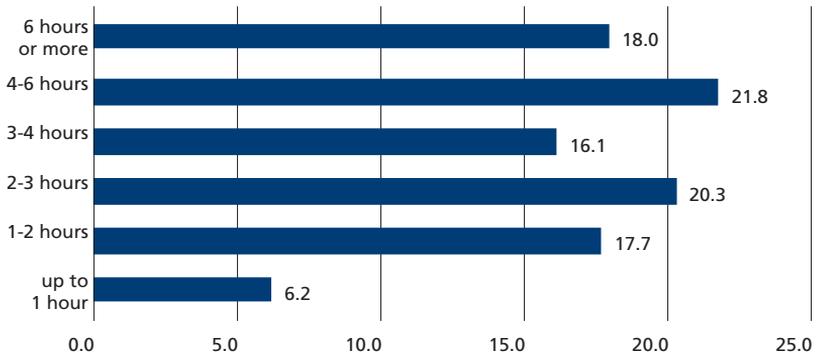
The respondents' taste in television is statistically linked to gender, residence, family's economic status, and their marital status. In particular, male respondents rarely watch Armenian folk music programmes ( $X^2=20.165, p<.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.130$ ), Armenian pop music programmes ( $X^2=57.094, p<.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.218$ ), foreign television series ( $X^2=38.555, p<.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.179$ ), and reality shows ( $X^2=18.841, p=.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.124$ ). They frequently watch foreign films ( $X^2=18.771, p=.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.125$ ), historical/scientific documentaries ( $X^2=19.794, p=.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.128$ ), and sports programmes ( $X^2=182.407, p<.001, \text{Cramer's } V=.390$ ). Parallel to an increase in age, young

people less frequently watch foreign music programmes ( $X^2=52.602$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.121$ ), Armenian television series ( $X^2=25.223$ ,  $p=.014$ , Cramer's  $V=.084$ ), foreign television series ( $X^2=25.756$ ,  $p=.012$ , Cramer's  $V=.085$ ), sports programmes ( $X^2=39.517$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.105$ ), game shows and quizzes, ( $X^2=23.761$ ,  $p=.022$ , Cramer's  $V=.081$ ). They more frequently watch Armenian films ( $X^2=24.571$ ,  $p=.017$ , Cramer's  $V=.083$ ) and news ( $X^2=47.929$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.115$ ). Urban youth, unlike those residing in the regions, watch foreign films more frequently ( $X^2=15.358$ ,  $p=.004$ , Cramer's  $V=.113$ ). In contrast, they watch less frequently Armenian folk music programmes ( $X^2=60.395$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.225$ ), Armenian films ( $X^2=55.383$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.215$ ), Armenian television series ( $X^2=61.584$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.227$ ), and the news ( $X^2=17.248$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.120$ ). Married respondents more frequently watch Armenian music programmes ( $X^2=20.711$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.132$ ), Armenian television series ( $X^2=20.193$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.131$ ), and news ( $X^2=40.515$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.185$ ). They more infrequently watch foreign music programmes ( $X^2=12.022$ ,  $p=.017$ , Cramer's  $V=.101$ ) and sports programmes ( $X^2=28.843$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.156$ ).

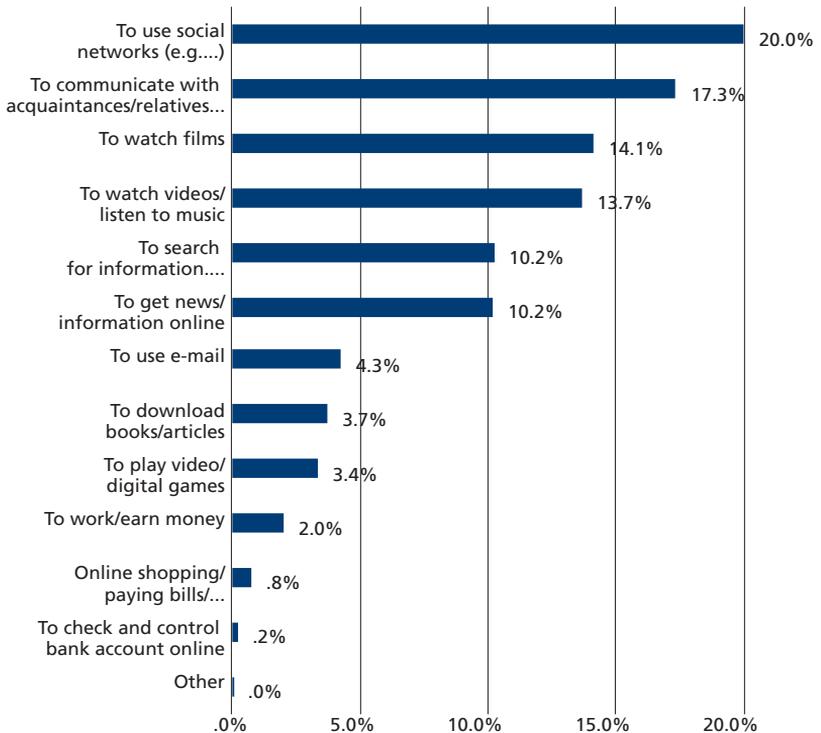
It should be noted that the respondents go online relatively more frequently than they watch television. The vast majority of them (96.1 per cent) go online. Moreover, use of the Internet is also more than the time spent watching television. 55.9 per cent of them use the Internet on average three or more hours a day; two to three hours (20.3%), and one to two hours (17.7 per cent). Only 6.2 per cent go online for less than an hour a day (**Figure 8.9**). While employed youth watch television more rarely than those not working, the use of the Internet does not correlate with employment status.

Young people use the Internet more frequently in order to access social media (20. per cent), to communicate with friends/acquaintances (17.3 per cent), watch films (14.1 per cent), watch videos/listen to music (13.7 per cent), find information and get the news (10.2 per cent). More rarely do they use e-mail (4.3 per cent), download books/articles (3.7 per cent), play video games (3.4 per cent), earn money (2 per cent), shop online and check accounts (1 per cent) (**Figure 8.10**).

**Figure 8.9: How many hours a day on average do you spend on the Internet?**



**Figure 8.10: Why do you primarily use the Internet?**

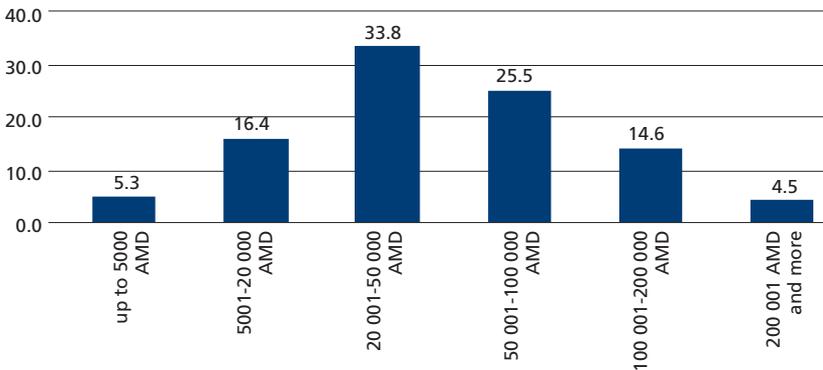


It is worrying that few of the respondents download books from the Internet, particularly since 5.4 per cent of them have no books at home and 32.6 per cent have up to 30 books—that is, at most one bookshelf. 26.7 per cent have 100 books or more, while 35.9 per cent frequently read, which is not in itself a large number if we bear in mind that 24.1 per cent of the respondents are pupils and 19.8 per cent are students.

### Personal Expenses

The respondents spend 4700 AMD/around 9 EUR (Mdn=3000 AMD/around 5.5 EUR) on average per month on Internet and mobile charges. As seen in (Figure 8.11) the monthly personal expenditure of the youth is generally distributed in the following manner:

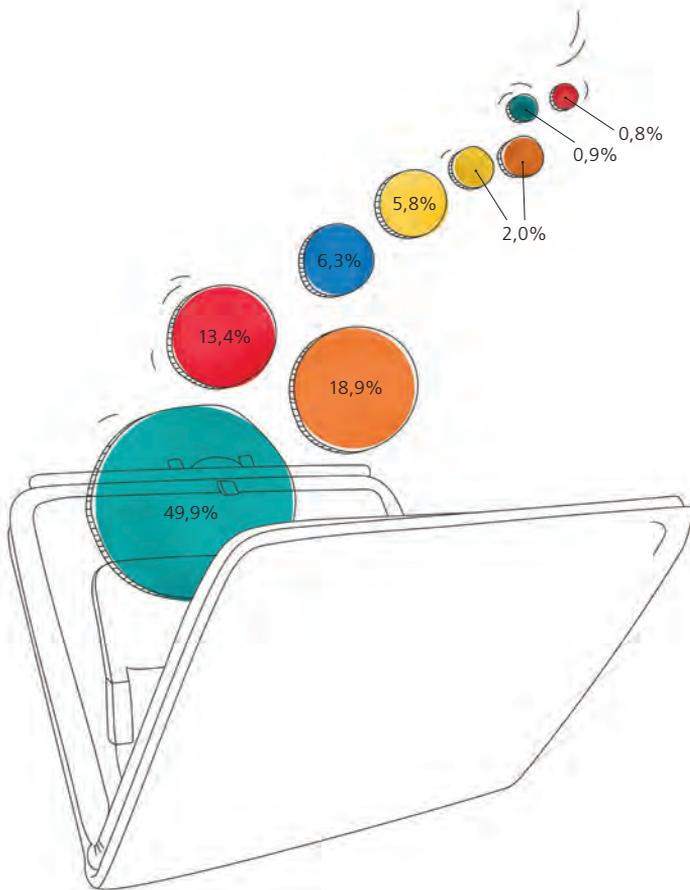
**Figure 8.11: Excluding the family's fixed living expenses (bills, food, etc.), how much money do you spend on your personal needs PER MONTH? 1 EUR=around 530 AMD**



On average, more is spent by the male respondents ( $X^2=28.180$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.153$ ); more mature youth ( $X^2=170.233$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.217$ ); and urban youth ( $X^2=18.901$ ,  $p=.002$ , Cramer's  $V=.126$ ).

The young people's main income is their parents' financial support (49.8 per cent), salary or fee (18.9 per cent), spousal support (1.4 per cent: in 97.6 per cent of cases, this concerns female respondents), transfers from abroad (6.3 per cent), family benefit (5.8 per cent), and grants and state aid (2 per cent each).

Figure 8.12: Which are your income sources?



- I receive financial support from my parents
- I have personal income
- I receive financial support from my husband/wife
- I receive money transfers from abroad
- Family benefit
- Grant, student loan, scholarship
- State support
- I have income from rent
- Income from land

The income distribution according to the respondents' gender, age, and residence is shown in **Figure 8.13**. The table clearly shows that parallel to the increase in age of the male respondents, the parents' support decreases and their personal income increases. Nevertheless even in the age group 26–29, the parents' financial support continues to be crucial.

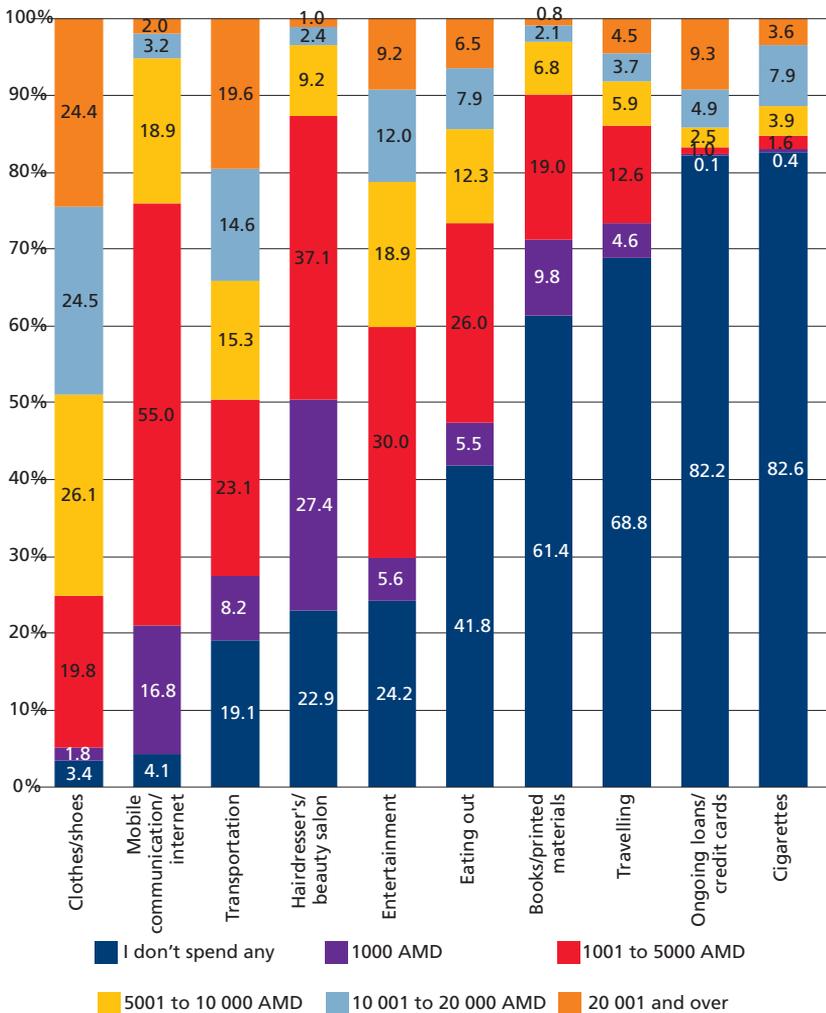
**Figure 8.13**

			Parental support	Family benefit	Transfers from abroad	State aid	Grant, scholarship	Private income	Spousal support	Income from rent	Income from land
City	male	14-17 years old	83.9	4.2	3.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	0.0	0.8	0.0
		18-21 years old	60.6	2.8	4.2	0.0	2.8	28.2	0.0	0.0	1.4
		22-25 years old	36.3	1.1	8.8	1.1	2.2	45.1	0.0	3.3	2.2
		26-29 years old	31.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0	55.2	0.0	3.0	1.5
	female	14-17 years old	75.9	11.0	7.6	2.1	2.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
		18-21 years old	73.3	2.0	8.0	0.7	4.0	7.3	4.7	0.0	0.0
		22-25 years old	28.2	3.4	4.0	1.1	2.9	27.0	30.5	2.3	0.6
		26-29 years old	15.7	3.9	0.7	2.0	0.0	31.4	44.4	1.3	0.7
Village	male	14-17 years old	76.3	12.4	3.1	2.1	1.0	4.1	0.0	1.0	0.0
		18-21 years old	51.7	5.2	19.0	5.2	0.0	15.5	1.7	1.7	0.0
		22-25 years old	42.2	3.1	10.9	0.0	0.0	39.1	3.1	1.6	0.0
		26-29 years old	38.1	2.4	7.1	0.0	0.0	42.9	2.4	0.0	7.1
	female	14-17 years old	71.1	15.8	7.9	2.6	1.3	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0
		18-21 years old	62.1	6.3	5.3	4.2	7.4	6.3	8.4	0.0	0.0
		22-25 years old	27.9	7.0	14.0	4.7	0.0	14.0	30.2	0.0	2.3
		26-29 years old	16.3	9.8	5.4	1.1	0.0	18.5	47.8	0.0	1.1

The income distribution according to expenditures is as follows: on average per month, the youth spend more on clothes and shoes, mobile and Internet connection, transport, beauty salons, pastimes, and eating out (**Figure 8.14**). It should be noted that on average, the respondents spend more on beauty salons than on books. Moreover, if male respondents spend more on entertain-

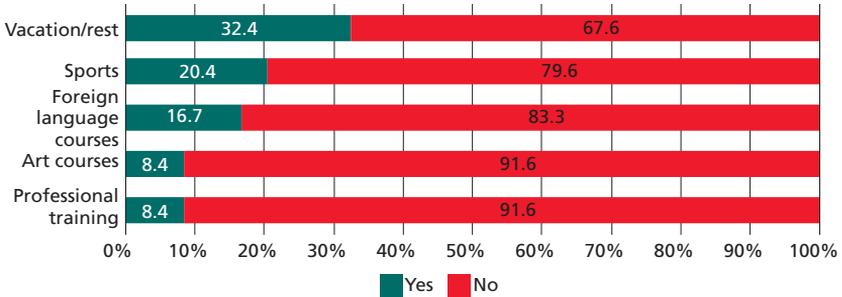
ment ( $X^2=47.047$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.214$ ) and eating out ( $X^2=51.344$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.217$ ), then females spend more on mobile/Internet ( $X^2=19.146$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.129$ ), books/printed materials ( $X^2=40.773$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.194$ ), and beauty salons ( $X^2=134.022$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.342$ ).

**Figure 8.14: Excluding the family's fixed living expenses (bills, food, etc.), how much money do you spend on your personal needs PER MONTH?**



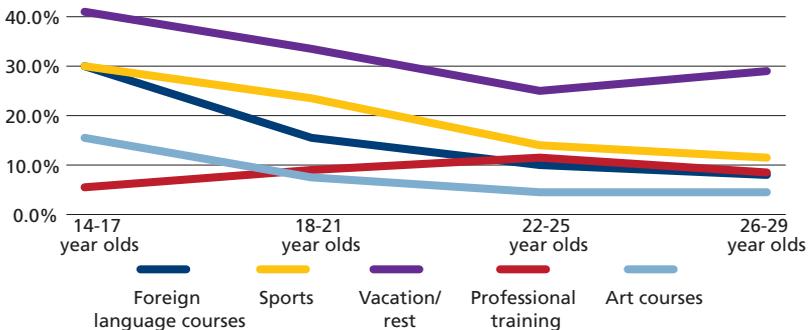
Over the past year, only a small portion of the youth have used paid services. In particular, they more frequently use recreational services (32.4 per cent), sports services (20.4 per cent), and foreign language lessons (16.7 per cent); they more seldom take courses relating to culture and professional training (8.4 per cent each) (Figure 8.15).

Figure 8.15: Did you attend/use any of the following paid activities in your leisure time in the past year?



Parallel to the increase in age of the respondents, there is a decrease in the frequency of use of paid services. In particular, age affects taking foreign language lessons ( $X^2=68.992$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.240$ ), using sports services ( $X^2=41.044$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.185$ ), and courses relating to culture ( $X^2=33.176$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.166$ ) (Figure 8.16).

Figure 8.16: Did you attend/use any of the following paid activities in your leisure time during last year? / Age

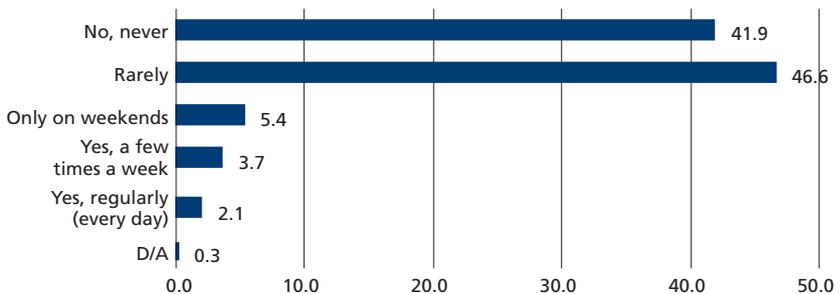


## Habits and Common Behaviour

It must be noted that with regard to smoking, it is mainly the male respondents who spend money on tobacco (94.7 per cent). Moreover, 14.8 per cent confess to smoking every day while 3.5 per cent mention that they smoke from time to time. The picture is the same for alcohol consumption: 11.2 per cent say they drink occasionally, while 46.6 per cent rarely drink (**Figure 8.17**). The frequency of smoking and drinking alcohol in youth correlate (Spearman's  $\rho = .356^{**}$ ,  $p < .001$ ): the more frequently they drink, the more frequently they also smoke.

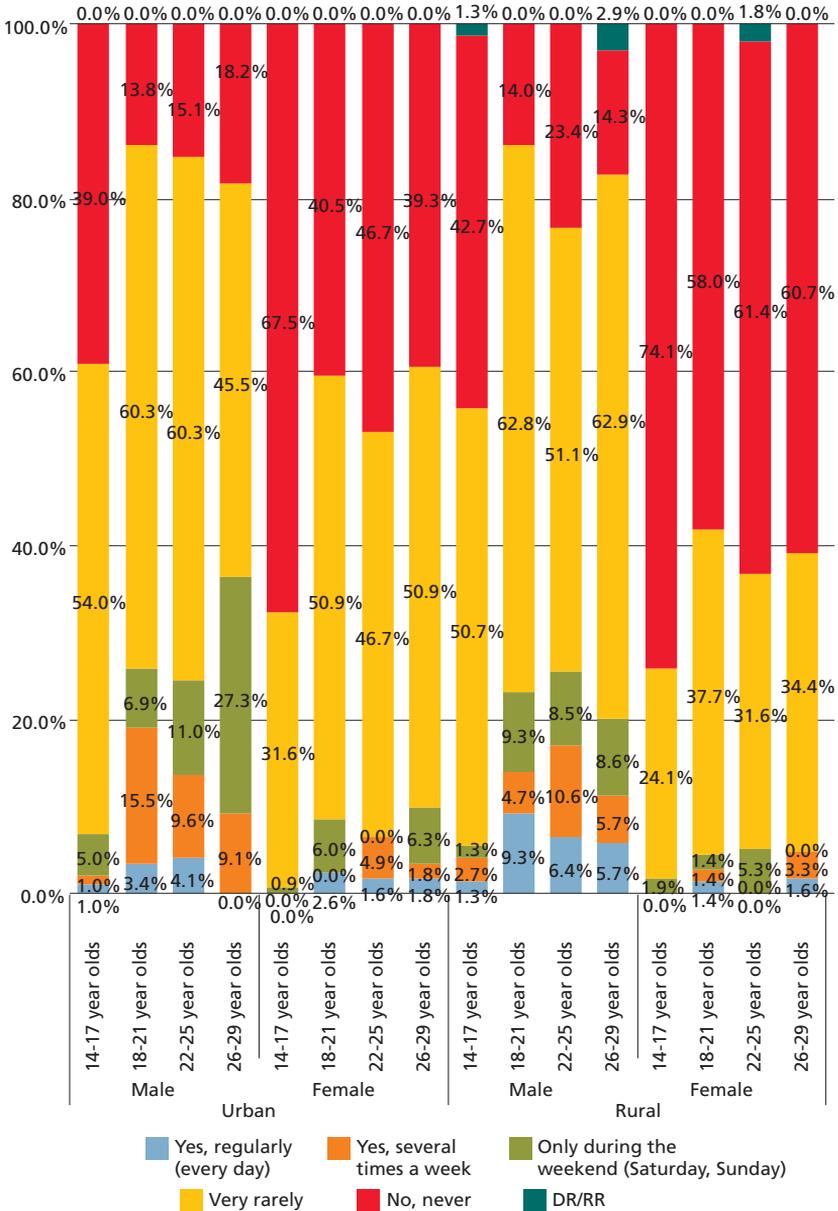
Alcohol is consumed daily, mainly by male respondents in rural areas—particularly those between the ages of 18 and 21 (9.3 per cent). Male respondents in urban areas between 26 and 29 consume alcohol on a weekly basis. The most infrequent users of alcohol are adolescent females (**Figure 8.18**).

**Figure 8.17: Do you drink alcohol?**



Qualitative findings show that the perceptions about gender differences are vividly expressed during discussions on the use of tobacco and alcohol. FGD participants debated this topic mainly from the point of view of socially acceptable or unacceptable behavioural models of male and female youth. For example, the abuse of alcohol by both genders was considered a negative phenomenon by the participants, but its use was considered normal when speaking about moderate use. The participants in the FGDs were more inclined to accept moderate use of alcohol as a female behavioural model than smoking. For both genders, smoking was considered to be a negative phenomenon damaging health; in particular, it was not accepted with respect to women, in the context of motherhood.

Figure 8.18: Do you drink alcohol?



*«Well you know, if the girl is of reproductive age then, what does smoking mean? No, that's not right, no»*

(26-year-old male, regional town).

The female respondents noted that an Armenian girl should not smoke.

*«Well, having a cigarette between her fingers does not suit an Armenian girl»*

(24-year-old female, village community).

*«Well, it's not right that the bad smell of cigarettes should come off a girl»*

(21-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«In our village, in the eyes of our husbands, you understand, the conduct of a girl who smokes is considered easy [referring to moral values]»*

(28-year-old female, village community).

The definitions are mostly linked to «symbolism»—that is, a bottle of beer and tobacco are not perceived as a part of the traditional image of an «Armenian woman». Nevertheless, particularly in Yerevan, female respondents have more liberal and egalitarian views on this issue.

*«Times have changed. Today a woman who smokes does not surprise anyone; that's a personal choice. They're free. If they want to smoke, let them. What's it to me?»*

(21-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«Well, the issue is not just smoking/drinking. For example, if I and my friends want to drink a lot, we gather in one of our homes away from the eyes of the public, so that they can't gossip left, right, and centre»*

(16-year-old female, Yerevan).

*«Smoking and drinking too much are equally dangerous habits for the health of both girls and boys»*

(25-year-old female, Yerevan).

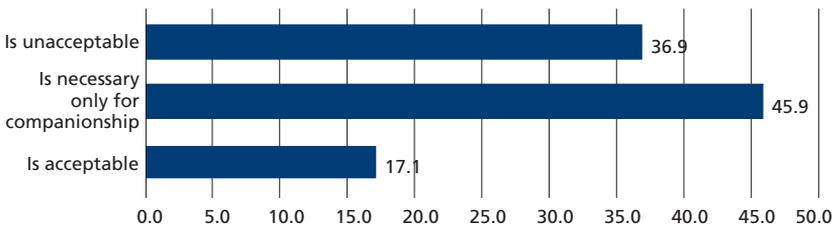
A more tolerant attitude towards elderly women who smoke was noticeable in almost all of the respondents.

«Well, if a woman is mature and has children, it's a completely different matter; now no one can criticise her, it's her own business»

(26-year-old male, regional town).

According to quantitative findings, drinking alcohol is unacceptable for 36.9 per cent of the respondents. For 45.9 per cent it is necessary only for conviviality and companionship and 17.1 per cent consider it acceptable. Moreover, finding the use of alcohol acceptable/unacceptable is statistically linked to the respondents' gender, age, and residence ( $X^2=18.777$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.126$ ;  $X^2=34.089$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.120$ ;  $X^2=34.566$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.171$ , respectively). It is more acceptable, on the whole, amongst males, those in urban areas, and more mature youth.

**Figure 8.19: In your opinion, alcohol is:**



It should be noted that 70.4 per cent of those questioned considered living a healthy lifestyle to be definitely fashionable, while smoking and using drugs were considered the most unfashionable pastimes (46.3 and 68.5 per cent respectively). Continuing the list of fashionable and unfashionable characteristics, it is trendy to dress fashionably (89.8 per cent), be good-looking (86.4 per cent), receive higher education (83.5 per cent), have a girlfriend/boyfriend (81.4 per cent), make a career (77.4 per cent), and be free (76.4 per cent). In contrast, loving one's homeland, being responsible, being knowledgeable, being married and faithful and helping others were perceived as less fashionable (**Figure 8.20**).

Whether being politically active and participating in civil movements is fashionable is not emphasised much by those questioned: 59 per cent consider the former not so fashionable and 4.1 per cent consider the latter unfashionable. In general, the majority of the respondents have lived a peaceful life over the past twelve

months and were not involved in violent conflicts. Pupils at school and students at university clash with each other the most (19.3 per cent) (Figure 8.21).

**Figure 8.20: Which of the following is in your opinion fashionable or unfashionable/old-fashioned?**

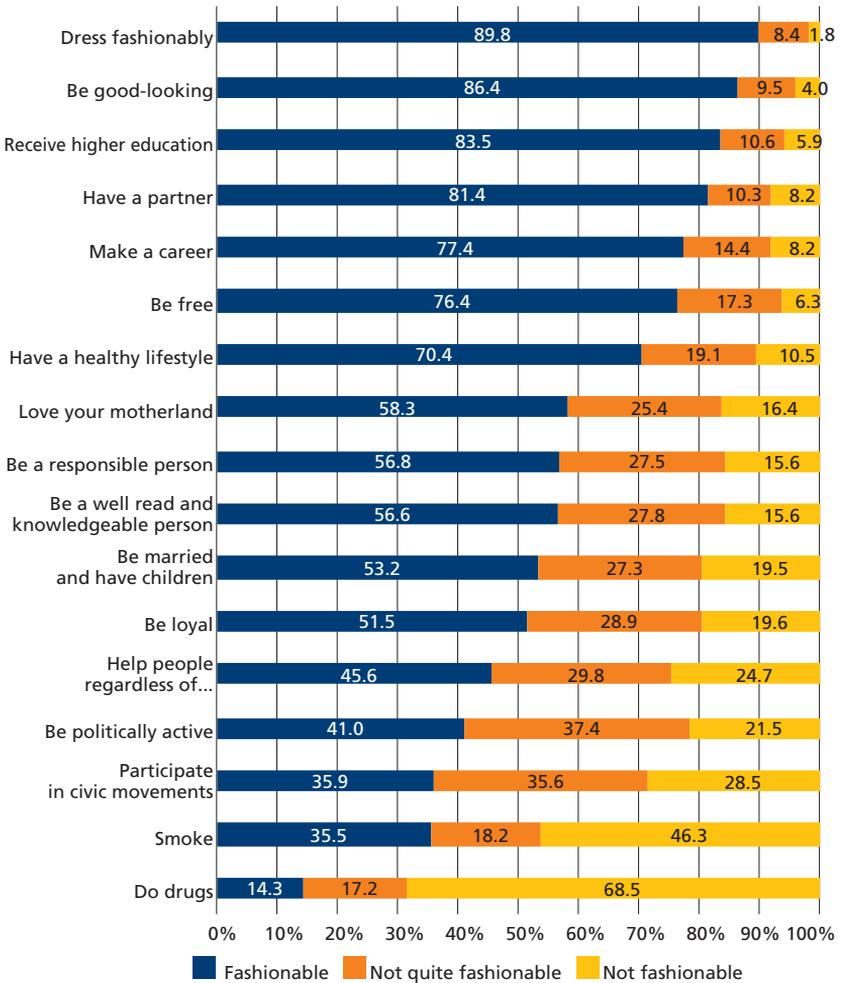
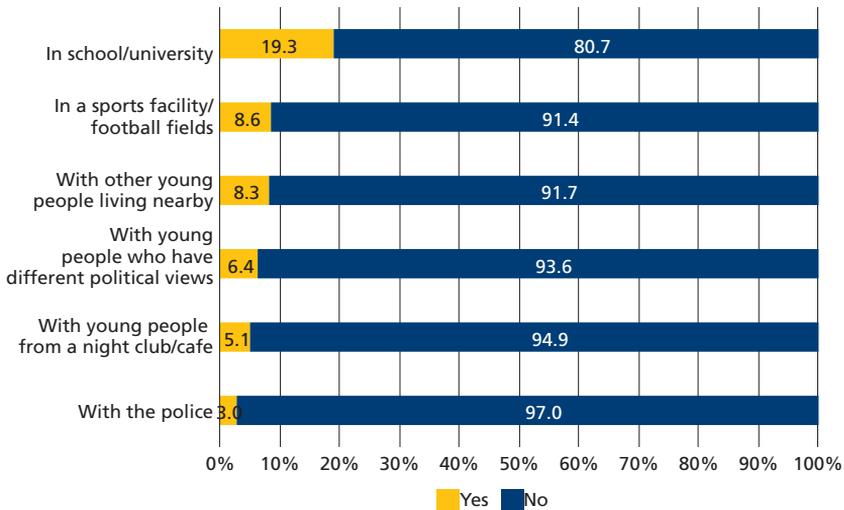


Figure 8.21: Have you been in violent conflicts within the last 12 months?



8.4 per cent have had violent clashes on a sports field and 8.2 per cent have had such clashes with neighbours. 6.3 per cent have had violent clashes with people with other political stances and 2.9 per cent have done so with the police.

### Sex Life

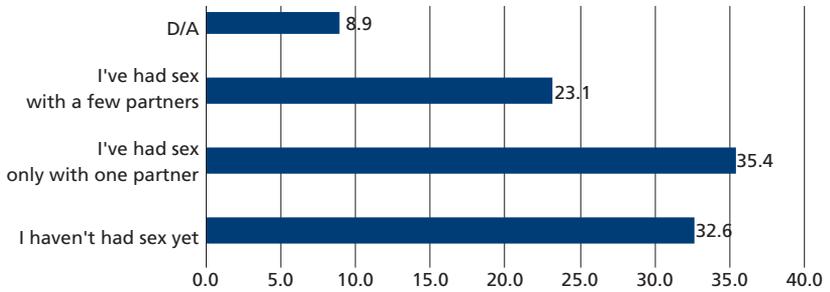
In the context of the lifestyle of the youth, it is necessary to also touch on the features of their sexual experiences.<sup>14</sup> 32.6 per cent note that they have not yet had any sexual relations. 35.4 per cent have had sexual relations with only one partner, while 23.1 per cent have had sexual relations with more than one partner (8.9 per cent declined to answer) (Figure 8.22).

Furthermore, only 11.4 per cent of the unmarried males had not had sexual relations, compared with 92.6 per cent in the case of the unmarried female respondents. Those who had sexual experience and those who did not were equally distributed in the age group 20–21. That is the transition threshold,

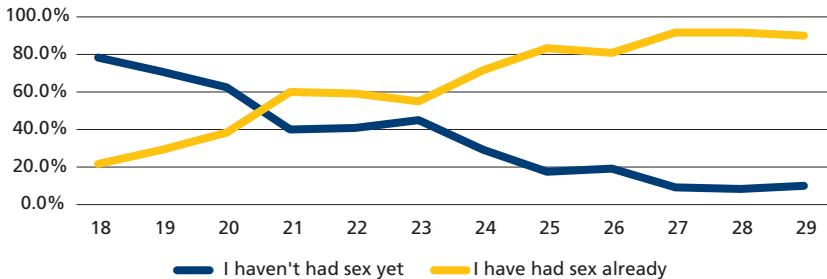
<sup>14</sup> Questions concerning sexual experience were for respondents who were over 18 years old (N=850).

when the number of those with sexual experience begins to exceed the number of those without. (Figure 8.23).

**Figure 8.22: Which of the following statements best describes your sexual experience?**

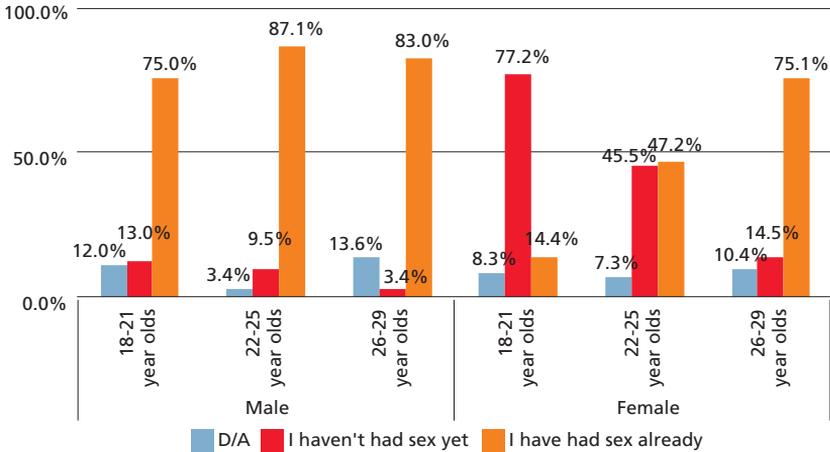


**Figure 8.23: Which of the following statements best describes your sexual experience? / Age**



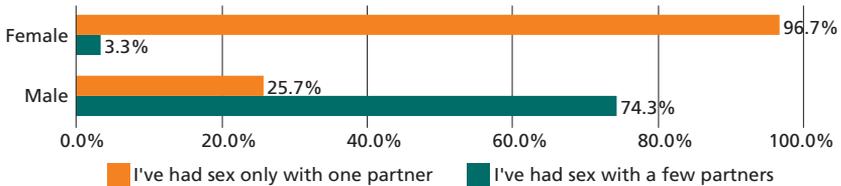
The respondents' sexual experience is statistically linked not only to age ( $X^2=122.133$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.401$ ), but also to gender ( $X^2=127.071$ ,  $p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.409$ ). As can be seen in Figure 8.24, 77.2 per cent of the female respondents under the age of 21 noted that they have no sexual experience, whereas 75 per cent of the males within the same age group do. Moreover, this disproportionate ratio is maintained among the 22- to 25-year-olds: 47.2 per cent of the female respondents have experience, compared with 87.1 per cent of the males.

Figure 8.24: Which of the following statements best describes your sexual experience? / Gender\_Age



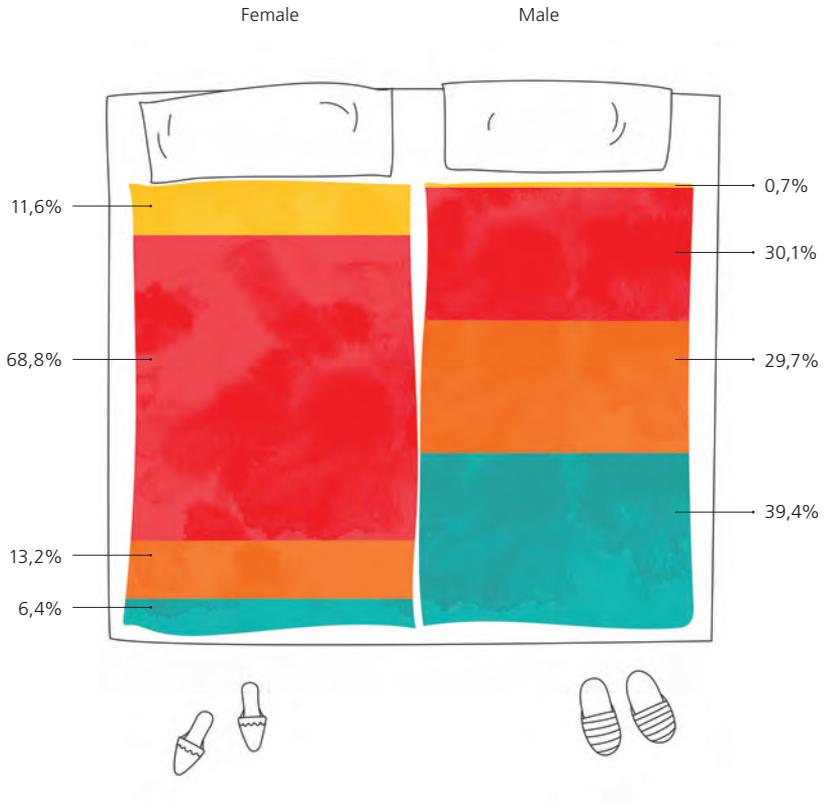
It is interesting that 74.3 per cent of male respondents with sexual experience have had several partners, yet only 3.3 per cent of females have had similar sexual experience (Figure 8.25).

Figure 8.25: Which of the following statements best describes your sexual experience? / Gender\_Age



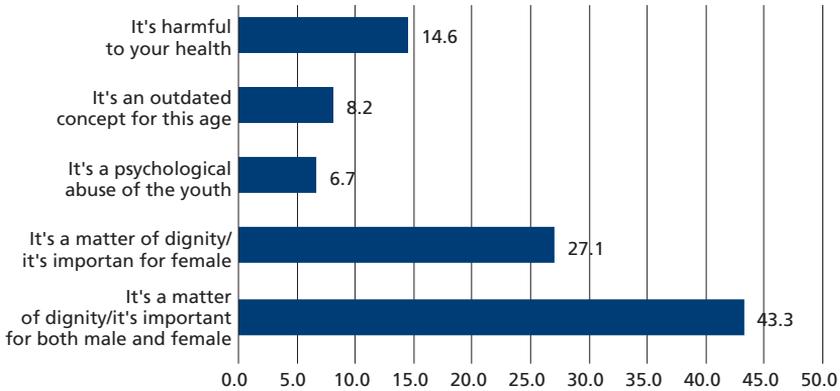
Contraceptives—condoms, pills, etc.—are used by 37.7 per cent of the older youth, out of which 18.5 per cent use them regularly. 7.6 per cent are unaware of contraceptives, while 54.7 per cent have never used them. Moreover, male respondents use contraceptives much more. In general, the distribution of contraceptive use according to gender is shown in Figure 8.26.

Figure 8.26: Do you use birth control?



- Yes, as a rule
- Yes, sometimes
- No, never
- I am not informed about birth control. I DK/RA what it is.

Figure 8.27: What do you think about sexual abstinence in this day and age?



As far as the respondents' attitudes towards sexual desires is concerned, it should be noted that the most widespread notion is that controlling sexual desires is a matter of dignity for both genders; that is what 43.3 per cent of the respondents believe. 27.1 per cent note that it is a matter of dignity, especially for girls. Only 29.6 per cent are against abstinence of sexual desires, 14.6 per cent consider it to be damaging to health, 6.7 per cent consider restraining sexual desires to be psychological pressure, and 8.2 per cent consider it to be an outdated position (Figure 8.27). Furthermore, controlling sexual desires is perceived as a matter of dignity, particularly among respondents in rural areas; those in urban areas hold a more liberal point of view ( $X^2=34.994, p<.001$ , Cramer's  $V=.217$ ).

## Discussion

As we have already noted in previous chapters, youth in Armenia mostly live with their parents in families comprising several generations, frequently under strict social supervision and financial dependency, which frequently also limits their freedom in the matter of leisure and entertainment (Roberts et al. 2009). Social supervision, gender, age, and status differences are also manifested in their lifestyles and leisure preferences. The sex, age, and residence of the youth are fundamental, determining factors. From that perspective, male

and female, married and single, village-dwellers and city-dwellers oppose each other in some sense.

Young women in Armenia typically spend their leisure time more passively. Young men have more active lives and are included in wider social networks than females, who prefer reading and creating. Data shows that young girls who smoke and/or drink are liable to be labelled negatively. According to the survey's findings, the behaviour of women using alcohol and smoking does not correspond to the image of an Armenian woman, and thus is severely criticised and socially sanctioned.

In the context of media preferences, it is worth noting that the Internet has become an integral part of the lifestyle of today's youth. Nevertheless, television remains a complementary source of information and leisure. Moreover, the frequency of watching television is conditioned by the social passivity of the youth and their parents' low level of cultural capital.

The differences between urban and rural dwellers are noticeable. Entertainment venues for young people are centralised in urban areas, especially in the capital, Yerevan (Rural community survey 2009). In the absence or scarcity of entertainment venues for youth in regional areas of Armenia, they frequently prefer passive pastimes, such as watching television, playing video games; at the same time, meeting with close friends and drinking and smoking periodically within that framework are becoming more common.

The extreme gender differentiation in the lifestyle of youth in Armenia is also noticeable in the context of sexual experience. The vast majority of those with sexual experience at an earlier age and with more than one partner are males. 3.3 per cent of adult females note that they have had sex with more than one partner, as opposed to 74.3 per cent of males. Moreover, a significantly large section of the youth consider sexual restraint a matter of dignity for youth—especially among young women—highlighting the traditional principles of sex education and upbringing.



# CONCLUSION

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This study has revealed the unique and diverse collective character of the youth representing the independence generation and thus creates a basis for political thought, discussion, and debate. Young people in Armenia are optimistic and resolute in their attitudes; yet they are also differentiated into social dichotomies based on gender, employment, and economic status. As a consequence, it is difficult to unambiguously characterise the independence generation. Their opinions are a mixture of post-Soviet, national, and international ideas and their values are typically unstable and uncertain. Sometimes they express liberal attitudes, and at other times conservative attitudes. There is a disparity between their aspirations and optimism about the future, and the difficulties they face coupled with the absence of institutional mechanisms for achieving success.

In general, a high level of behavioural uncertainty in the social lives of Armenia's youth is characteristic. Proneness to crisis *and globalisation work contrary to the principles of local self-government and democratic jurisdiction, thus lowering young people's social trust in political institutions*. Therefore, they move into a unique self-government regime—typical of post-Soviet reality—which functions mainly on the basis of traditions, common sense, social psychology, social ties, and personal perceptions towards the future and not on stable, functioning, political institutional mechanisms.

In summarising the study's findings, we offer general characteristics of youth in Armenia today, differentiating socio-demographic sub-groups depending on their civic-political activeness/passiveness, social inclusion/exclusion, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with life, social trust/distrust, optimism/pessimism about the future, and socio-economic independence/dependence. The sex, age, type of residence, income, and education of the youth questioned were determining factors.

Thus:

- ▶ Social activity is more typical in males, while political activity is more typical among rural youth with lower levels of education.
- ▶ Males with higher levels of education and income are more socially inclusive. More vulnerable, from the point of view of social exclusion, are young married women for whom traditional gender roles, normative expectations, and strict social supervision are particularly characteristic.
- ▶ Youth with higher incomes are more satisfied with life and have more optimistic life plans. These plans become more pessimistic with increased age.
- ▶ A high level of social trust is typical of rural youth.
- ▶ The most autonomous, independent social categories are males with high incomes.

Generally speaking, the findings of the study reveal that today's youth in Armenia are vulnerable and scarcely independent. If we were to create a collective image of a young person in Armenia based on this study, we would say that he/she is least guaranteed to have a job in his/her area of specialisation. Instead, the practice of «who he/she knows» plays a big role in getting a job. This young person is unlikely to trust the elected political bodies and exhibits low levels of political participation. He/she prefers not to take a stance between the European or the Eurasian integration, a factor that would result in losses, one way or the other. The Internet is his/her main source of information. This young person is most likely to be pessimistic about a stable future and, with age, confidence in the courts, police, Human Rights' Defender, mass media, medical establishments, NGOs, and banks decreases even more. The life of this young person is highly dependent and diversified based on his/her gender, being a student or a nonstudent, and living in an urban or rural area. The basic parameter of national identity is Christianity. This person is intolerant towards homosexuals. The main purpose in life is to make his/her parents proud. If male, he would have had a sexual relationship before becoming 21, and be in the contrasting situation if female. If male, he would have the authority to making important decisions upon marriage, and be in the contrasting situation if female.

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Like many post-Soviet states, the South Caucasus countries are still in transition. Armenia, the smallest republic in the region, is still trying to find its way between Europe and Russia and the values, integration models, and security factors related to it. The transformation into a democratic society and a free market economy is far from being completed. In addition, the country is challenged by the lasting conflicts with Turkey and Azerbaijan, which cause isolation as well as a «neither peace, nor war» environment.

The study at hand explores the worries, aspirations, values, and lifestyles of Armenia's youth. Young people who are today aged between 14 and 29 years grew up after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and in independent Armenia—«the generation of independence». They are an important indicator for the relationship to the Soviet legacy on the one hand, and the future development of their society on the other hand.

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